



# FOUR EMPIRES AND AN ENLARGEMENT

States, Societies and Individuals in Central and Eastern  
Europe

Edited by Daniel Brett, Claire Jarvis, Irina Marin

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States, Societies and Individuals: Transfiguring Perspectives and Images  
of Central and Eastern Europe

*Edited by*

DANIEL BRETT, CLAIRE JARVIS AND IRINA MARIN

*Papers from the 5<sup>th</sup> International  
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UCL*

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## Introduction

The relationship between states, societies, and individuals in Central and Eastern Europe has been characterised by periods of change and redefinition. The current political, economic, social and cultural climate necessitates a discussion of these issues, both past and present. It is this theme which the proposed publication intends to discuss using a selection of papers given at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Postgraduate Conference on Central and Eastern Europe held at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) in 2003. The papers represent work from young international scholars from Europe and North America writing on Central and Eastern Europe.

The book consists of seven papers and develops an interdisciplinary framework reflecting the range of topics discussed during the conference. It embraces the regional breadth of Central and Eastern Europe containing analyses of Russia, the former Soviet Republics, Central Europe and South Eastern Europe. The papers chosen cover a variety of fields and adopt a corresponding range of approaches with a view to assessing from a multidisciplinary perspective the relationship between state, society and individuals.

The papers in the book have been ordered chronologically. The volume starts with an analysis by Julia Mannherz of social conflict in late imperial Russia and moves on to Sergei Zhuk's discussion of the *Stundist* movement in Ukraine. The third paper from Stefan Detchev is a discussion of the late-nineteenth-century politics of commemoration surrounding the Bulgarian war of independence. The theme of the politics of commemoration is also present in Andrzej Michalczyk's analysis of the commemoration of the plebiscite in Silesia by Germans and Poles during the interwar period. Michalczyk examines how a shared event is commemorated and interpreted differently by the two national groups. The idea of common and shared histories is further developed by Rüdiger Ritter in his study of the history and the historiography of post-Communist Poland, Belarus and Lithuania. The move into the contemporary period is completed in the final two papers. The use of historical imagery for political purposes is explored in Markus Wien's study of the King Simeon II Party in Bulgaria as well as the way in which the historical image of the monarchy has been changed for political purposes during the transition from communism to democracy. The final paper by Maria Aluchna continues the discussion of the process of transition by examining the economic transformation from a communist command economic system to a modern capitalist economy.

The editors of the book would like to thank the following people for their support during the development of the conference and of this book. We would like to thank our co-organisers Dr Emma Minns, Sara Cohen, Gonso Pozo-Martin and Caroline Tower. We would also like to thank our academic advisor Professor Alena Ledeneva for her support and guidance. Our gratitude goes to Professor George Kolankiewicz and Dr Robin Aizlewood, Directors of SSEES, for their willingness to help this project, and to Christine Fernandes for her practical advice. Finally we wish to thank the referees, who provided advice and comments on the papers: Professor Faith Wigzell, Professor Janet Hartley, the late Professor John Klier, Dr Heather Coleman, Professor Dennis Deletant, Dr Dimitrina Mihaylova, Dr Richard Butterwick, Dr Wojciech Janik, Professor Timothy Snyder, Dr Piotr Jaworski and Professor Tomasz Mickiewicz.

# Mysterious knocks, flying potatoes and rebellious servants: Spiritualism and social conflict in late Imperial Russia

Julia Mannherz<sup>1</sup>  
(Oriol College Oxford)

Strange things occurred in the night of 13 December, 1884, in the city of Kazan on the river Volga. As *Volzhskii vestnik* (*The Volga Herald*) reported, unidentifiable raps were heard in the flat rented by the retired officer Florentsov on Srednaia Iamskaia Street. Before the newspaper described what had actually been observed, it made it clear that ‘all descriptions here are true facts, as has been ascertained by a member of our newspaper’s editorial board’. This assertion was deemed necessary because the phenomena were of a kind ‘regarded as “inexplicable”’. On the evening of 13 December:

Mr. Florentsov was just about to go to bed, when a loud rap on his apartment’s ceiling was heard, which caused worry even to the neighbours. At about the same time, potatoes and bricks began to fly out of the oven pipe and smashed the kitchen window. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the ‘phenomena’ continued all day long and were accompanied by many comical episodes. About 10 well-known officers came to Mr. Florentsov’s apartment. They put a heavy pole against the oven-door, but the shaft was not strong enough and it soon flew to one side. [After this] potatoes rolled out beneath the furniture, fell from the walls, rained down from the ceiling; sometimes a brick appeared at the scene of action. One officer was hit by a potato on his head, another one on his nose, some were hit by the bullets of this invisible foe at their backs, shoulders and so on. The aide of the district police officer showed up at the battlefield; the flat was thoroughly searched but no explanation could be found. [...] The potato bombardment continued and one of the rank and file received such a severe blow, that he was beaten off his feet by fear. However, the soldiers endured the potato fire and calmly collected the shells eating some of them on the battlefield, thus making the most of the fact that many of them were cooked. [...] On the 15<sup>th</sup> many Kazaners visited Florentsov’s apartment, quite a few of them spiritualist amateurs or simply fascinated by some kind of devilry or other.<sup>2</sup>

*Volzhskii Vestnik* and other newspapers and journals subsequently published follow-up stories of this case, and it emerged that Florentsov’s landlords tried to put an end to the mysterious potato-throwing by holding a public prayer (*moleben*). They came with an icon, holy water, spices and frankincense. But as they were fumigating the apartment, fourteen potatoes fell down from the ceiling. Indeed, the prayer seems to have aggravated the unknown cause even more: the maid Sasha had to evade a knife that was thrown with such force that half of the blade made its way into the kitchen wall. After this incident, Florentsov’s son-in-law

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), whose financial support has made this research possible. I would also like to thank the two anonymous referees for their valuable comments.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Kartofel’naia kolonada,’ *Volzhskii vestnik*, 16 December 1884: 3.

told the girl to lie down on the [kitchen-] bench and to think as well as to wish for something to fall down and break to pieces. Suddenly and in front of the captain's and the batman's eyes, a tray came down from the wall. Immediately afterwards the girl, too, fell from the bench and regained consciousness only after she hit her head against the table.<sup>3</sup>

Florentsov and his family soon came to terms with their new situation and made the most of it: they held a séance, inviting their acquaintances, among them the chief of the city police and a police officer. The message from the other world was 'very unclear', but promised the continuation of the baffling manifestations.<sup>4</sup> Judging from the newspaper *Volzhskii vestnik* and from the spiritualist journal *Rebus*, the spirits kept their promise. Although no further news emerged about Florentsov and his potatoes, before a week had passed, the mysterious events had spread to other apartments in Kazan and to an estate in the Kazan *guberniia*.<sup>5</sup>

Newspaper accounts such as these were very common during the last decades of the Russian empire, a time marked by economic change, social upheaval and cultural transformation. They were in no way restricted to a few geographic areas, but remained a common feature in the pages of elite and low-brow newspapers, illustrated journals and cheap publications until the revolution of 1917. These reports were part of a broader fascination with the supernatural that gripped fin-de-siècle society in Russia as it did in the rest of Europe. In Russia, notions of the occult were considerably influenced by spiritualism, a spiritual practice which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. The fascination with the occult in general and spiritualism in particular is not only mirrored by newspaper accounts about haunted houses, but also by literary or philosophical works of the Silver Age, some of which very overtly incorporated occult notions and on a much broader scale by popular entertainment such as early Russian cinema, popular theatre and circus acts.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its ubiquity, urban occultism and the reception of spiritualism in fin-de-siècle Russia has only recently attracted the attention of historians. Soviet publications on the matter have frequently maintained that the mysterious only fascinated the cultural elites of the tsarist empire, thereby illustrating the intelligentsia's decadence, its otherworldly concerns and its ultimate inability to govern the country. That ordinary Russians or even workers were also intrigued by the occult, did not fit into the ideological framework. This view has crept into many non-Soviet publications as well.<sup>7</sup> In the last decade, however, several studies have dealt with diverse popular

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<sup>3</sup> M. B., 'Mediumicheskie iavleniia v Kazani (Korrespondentsiia "Rebusa")', *Rebus*, 1885 4: 30. In this account, the name of the affected is given as Florenskii instead of Florentsov.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> 'Chto za chertovshchina?' *Volzhskii vestnik*, 21 December 1884: 2; Nik. Ivanov, 'Mediumicheskie iavleniia (pis'mo iz Kazani)', *Rebus*, 1885 4: 16; 'Novye mediumicheskie iavleniia v Kazani', *Rebus*, 1885, 4, p. 48; 'Novoe proiavlenie mediumicheskoi siloi v Kazani', *Rebus*, 1885 4: 203; M. Sukhanov, 'Mediumicheskie iavleniia', *Rebus*, 1885 4: 59; 'Vnimanie "Rebusa" i vsekh spiritov', *Volzhskii vestnik*, 2 March 1885, p. 2; 'Kratkie zametki', *Rebus* 1885 4: 115.

<sup>6</sup> For the occult in Silver Age literature see for example V. E. Aleksandrov, 'Unicorn impaling a knight: the transcendent and man in Bely's Petersburg,' *Canadian-American Slavonic Studies*, 16, 1982: 1-44; David M. Bethea, 'Aspects of the apocalyptic plot in the age of Symbolism: Blok, Bely and the poetics of revelation,' in *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs: Russian Literature in Modern Times*, ed. Boris Gasparov, Berkeley 1995; Bogomolov, Nikolai Alekseevich. *Russkaia literatura nachala XX veka i okkul'tizm: Issledovaniia i materialy*, Moscow 1999; Magnus Ljunggren, *The Russian Mephisto: A Study of the Life and Works of Emilii Medtner*, Stockholm 1994

<sup>7</sup> See for example Beer, Daniel. 'The Medicalization of Religious Deviance in the Russian Orthodox Church (1880-1905),' *Kritika*. 5, 3, 2004: 451-82 (p. 479).

aspects of supernatural practice in imperial Russia's urban centres, while others have focused on the folkloric traditions of the rural population. Maria Carlson's study on the theosophical movement, for example, examines the history and cultural significance of Helena Blavatskaia's teachings, while Faith Wigzell's book on fortune-telling traces traditional influences on divinatory and printing practices. Christine D. Worobec's work on demon possession focuses on the peasantry.<sup>8</sup> Other publications have been concerned with stock-taking of the many occult practices. The volume edited by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal on the occult in Russian and Soviet culture thus presents essays that address the issue from a broad range of perspectives and provide a general overview. Last but not least, W.F. Ryan's seminal and encyclopaedic study on magic in Russian history is a treasure trove for those eager to learn about the myriad facets of magical practices and beliefs.<sup>9</sup>

The popular fascination with the occult can reveal a lot about pre-revolutionary urban Russia. Historians of Russia have long analysed the late imperial period in the light of social antagonism and economic development. We know about the political conclusions that contemporaries drew from the cultural changes and social upheavals that they experienced. But the other cultural and spiritual implications that these transformations had for Russians at the turn of the century have been neglected for a long time. In the past decade, cultural history has addressed some of these issues. More recently, enquiries into consumerism have analysed attitudes towards the self, national identity, society and culture from new perspectives.<sup>10</sup> Finally, a few publications have drawn our attention to questions of belief and religion.<sup>11</sup> My work is indebted to these studies for initiating new thinking about the old empire. In the picture that emerges from an inquiry into the fascination with the occult, social antagonism, although still present, shifts from the public to the private, from open demands for emancipation to covert defiance with supernatural support, while at the same time common ground appears on which members of different social backgrounds could assemble. Late imperial society emerges highly complicated and ambivalent, extremely contradictory and less clear-cut.

Among the groups that addressed supernatural and mystical matters in late imperial Russia, spiritualists were culturally the most influential. The movement was originally born in 1848 in the United States, in a climate of spiritual and political crisis and religious quest.<sup>12</sup> It soon spread to Western Europe, especially to Britain from where it

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<sup>8</sup> Maria Carlson, *'No Religion Higher than Truth': A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia 1875-1922*, Princeton 1993; Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*, DeKalb, IL 2001; Faith Wigzell, *Reading Russian Fortunes: Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*, Cambridge 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Ithaca, NY, and London, 1997; W.F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, Stroud 1999.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914*, Berkeley and London 1993; Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (eds.), *Cultures in flux: lower-class values, practices, and resistance in late imperial Russia*, Princeton 1994; Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*, 2 ed. Ithaca 1996; Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era*, Ithaca and London 2003.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale*, Ithaca and London 1999; Heather J. Coleman, 'Becoming a Russian Baptist: Conversion Narratives and Social Experience,' *The Russian Review* 61 2002: 94-112.

<sup>12</sup> Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, Bloomington 1997. On spiritualism see Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*, Cambridge 1985; Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910*,



reached Russia. After a slow start but a few high-flown scandals in tsarist society, it gained notoriety and a considerable following in the mid-1870s and 1880s. The basic assumption of spiritualism is the belief in man's continuative existence after death as a spirit and the notion that communication between the living and the deceased is possible. This can be achieved through a medium, a person sensitive enough to encourage spirit activity and thus to convey messages. Initial spirit activity is assumed to consist of blows and raps to the walls, ceilings or furniture. Once such phenomena are observed, a code can be agreed between the living and the ghostly visitor and messages can be exchanged. Usually, this involved the holding of a séance. For this purpose, sitters gathered around a table in a darkened room. They held hands, thumbs and little fingers touching, to form a chain of energy believed to assist spirit activity. Often, prayers or psalms were recited or the group engaged in joint singing. Although this did not guarantee supernatural occurrences – in some cases nothing might happen – at other instances, knocks would be heard, messages conveyed or, if one were particularly lucky, a spirit could materialise as a radiant white figure.

This, apart from the materialisation, is what happened in Florentsov's apartment in 1884. Florentsov's case conforms to the general pattern of events in haunted houses: it began with mysterious knocks, which gradually grew louder as the spirits became more assertive. The raps were then supplemented by flying objects, broken glass and smashed dishes. An unsuccessful *moleben* further aggravated the situation and a member of the household was slightly injured, before a séance confirmed the involvement of spirits.

Rumours and gossip, which unfortunately did not survive to be used by historians, newspapers and popular publications were the main means which spread the news of such mysterious events and popularised spiritualist beliefs. In tsarist Russia, elite and low-brow periodicals took up the subject of spiritualism and ensured that it became a prominent part of fin-de-siècle culture. The first publications about ghostly communications appeared in the thick journals that were so influential in turn-of-the-century Russian culture: in particular, articles in *Vestnik Evropy* (*The Herald of Europe*) and *Russkii vestnik* (*The Russian Herald*) initiated debate about mediumistic phenomena.<sup>13</sup> The subject immediately made it into upper-class newspapers such as *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta* (*The News and Stock-Exchange Gazette*), *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti* (*The Saint Petersburg News*) and *Novoe vremia* (*The New Times*). It was also taken up by provincial publications such as *Volzhskii vestnik* and by newspapers that catered for the needs of low clerks and literate workers, such as *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (*The Petersburg Gazette*), *Peterburgskii listok* (*The Petersburg Flyer*), and *Gazeta kopeika* (*The Kopeck Gazette*).<sup>14</sup> Since 1881, with the

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London 1986; Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Nineteenth Century England*, London 1989; R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*, New York 1977. There is no monograph about spiritualism in Russia, but it is addressed in Maria Carlson, 'Fashionable Occultism: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, and Hermeticism in Fin-de-Siècle Russia,' in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal ed. *The Occult in Soviet and Russian Culture*, Ithaca 1997; Michael D. Gordin, 'Loose and Baggy Spirits: Reading Dostoevskii and Mendeleev,' *Slavic Review* 60 2001:756-780; Michael D. Gordin, *A Well-Ordered Thing: Dmitrii Mendeleev and the Shadow of the Periodic Table*, New York 2004.

<sup>13</sup> The article that let loose the public debate on spiritualism in Russia was N. P. Vagner, 'Pis'mo k redaktoru: po povodu spiritizma,' *Vestnik Evropy*, 1875, pp. 855-75. It was followed by A.M. Butlerov, 'Mediumicheskie iavleniia,' *Russkii vestnik* 120 1875: 300-48.

<sup>14</sup> On the other organs see for example 'O privedeniiakh,' *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, 25 June and 16 July 1902, p. 2, p. 2; G. N., 'Voskresnye negativy: Privedenie v \*\*\* departamente,' *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti*, 8 (20) May 1888: 2-3; M. Bern, 'Na seanse u spiritov,' *Novoe vremia*, 1 (13) August 1883: 2; V. S. P., 'Pochemu teper' zagovorili o prizrakakh,' *Novoe vremia*, No. 5704, 1892: 2-3; 'Nevedomoe

first appearance of *Rebus*, Russians could subscribe to a journal devoted entirely to spiritualism. Moreover, readers were overwhelmed by a flood of cheap how-to instruction manuals devoted to occult matters: how to become a medium, how to summon a ghost, how to have prophetic dreams, or how to anticipate and predict the future.<sup>15</sup> Although spiritualist notions and other occult traditions were regularly confused in these publications, the general popularity and appeal of such beliefs is beyond doubt.

Despite the large number of accounts about haunted houses, what really happened that December night in Florentsov's apartment cannot be ascertained. However, many reports suggest that these events were taken seriously and seemed plausible to contemporaries. Other accounts are highly ironical and this seems to imply that some journalists and/or readers were amused by alleged hauntings. The frequent appearance of reports about haunted houses, however, indicates that these texts brought up urgent questions.

### *The séance and social experimentation*

Why was spiritualism so appealing to diverse groups that included subscribers of thick journals and readers of kopeck newspapers, ranging from aristocrats, members of the intelligentsia, professionals, and workers to some peasants? There is no single answer to this question; the reasons for the popularity of spiritualism are various and multi-layered. The charm of spiritualism was partly due to the fact that its practices were entertaining and thrilling, but they also offered individualised religious practice outside or alongside the seemingly rigid and authoritarian Orthodox Church. Spiritualism sought rational explanations for transcendental phenomena and thus pledged to straddle the divide between traditional society and modernity. It also provided space for alternative visions of empire. The *dramatis personae* of spiritualism, the spirits, could provide justice where the authorities of this world acted unfairly or arbitrarily. At the same time, spiritualism was highly diverse: no one agreed on what caused the phenomena in darkened rooms and as a consequence these occurrences were open to different interpretations. Spiritualism and especially hauntings also provided space for the expression of social conflict. The reasons for the popularity of séances and associated beliefs were thus both spiritual and religious but also social and political. In this paper, I shall concentrate on the space spiritualism provided for the enacting of social tensions.

Séances not only provided space for individual experience of the transcendent, they also held out the hope of a new society. In spiritualist writings, belief in spirits was equated with civilisation and modernity, while Orthodox anathema, scepticism or the unwillingness to acknowledge spirit activities were linked to conservatism.<sup>16</sup> The hostile treatment of spiritualism by representatives of the state church bestowed the

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i neob-iasnimoe v chelovecheskoi zhizni,' *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 24 December 1900: 3. *Peterburgskii listok* ran a weekly series from 1899 until 1907 entitled "Iz mira tainstvennogo". See also 'Iz mira tainstvennogo: Fotografiia dukha,' *Moskovskaia gazeta kopeika*, 2 August 1910: 4; 'Poslednyi debut artistki M. Ia. Puare,' *Gazeta kopeika*, 22 September 1916: 3.

<sup>15</sup> See for example A. I. Litvinov, *Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo k uznnavaniu chelovecheskoi sud'by s ukazaniem pravil cheniia chuzhikh myslei, byt' schastlivym i liubimim vsemi*, Khar'kov, 1887; *Zerkalo tainnykh nauk ili otrazhenie sud'by cheloveka: Polnyi kurs gipnotizma*, Moscow 1914.

<sup>16</sup> 'Aleksandr Nikolaevich Aksakov,' *Rebus* 22, 1903, pp. 25-7, 45-6; Vagner, 'Pis'mo k redaktoru: po povodu spiritizma.'; V. Pribytkov, 'Vopros o spiritizme v Rossii,' *Rebus*, 19 1900: 126-9, 135-6, 143-4, 151-3, 174-5, 191-2, 200-1, 206-8, 223-5, 230, 237-8, 248-9, 259, 387-8, 393-5, 405-6, 455-6.

movement with a liberal and an almost rebellious character vis-à-vis officialdom. And indeed, séances realised some liberal ideals. For example, they frequently turned tsarist society upside-down. Although mediumistic powers were thought to be bestowed upon members of all social strata, most professional mediums and especially those whose names appeared on the pages of newspapers and journals, were from the disadvantaged groups of society: they were women, members of ethnic minorities or representatives of the working classes. Spiritualist investigators, i.e. those who could afford to employ the services of a professional medium, were most frequently members of the aristocracy or of the privileged educated elite. Ordinary Russians, of course, also engaged in spiritualist activities. But in these cases too, mediums were often socially inferior to other séance participants. In the countryside, for example, where patriarchal structures dominated society, mediums were frequently women, young girls or female wards. Séances thus offered a carnivalesque mirror image of the late empire and its social make-up. Socially disadvantaged mediums were in charge of the event. They demanded the room be lit according to their wishes and commanded the sitters to sing, pray or be silent. 'What the séance promised', Alex Owen has observed for the English context, 'was the ritualised violation of cultural norms.'<sup>17</sup> This, too, was the case in Russia. Spirits dishevelled the hair-dos of well-to-do Petersburgers and also frequently hit them. The medium Jan Guzik, a former tanner from the empire's Polish region, offered séances that were both highly popular and especially feared among Petersburgers: sometimes chairs were dragged from beneath affluent sitters, punches were severe and in 1913 one of the attendants was seriously injured. Such physical attacks on representatives of the privileged strata would not have been sanctioned outside the séance room, but within the spiritualist context they were accepted even by those who got a bloody nose from spirit communications.

Despite spiritualism's ability to assemble men and women of different backgrounds around a séance-table, the rituals associated with the movement provided ample room for rebellious acts. This was most conspicuous in the cases of haunted houses, where women servants seemed to be rising against their superiors.

### *Haunted houses and social conflict*

Houses troubled with banging spirits, rapping ghosts and haunting apparitions have a long history in Russia. Russian folklore most frequently attributed strange noises, groans and knockings in the peasant hut to the *domovoi*, the spirit of the house. In the late nineteenth century, however, belief in traditional and folkloric spirits was in decline and this is mirrored in newspaper reports about haunted houses.<sup>18</sup> In urban centres, spiritualism became the fashionable and appropriate framework within which haunted houses were interpreted, while reference to the *domovoi* became regarded as a sign for rural backwardness.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Owen, *Darkened Room*, p. 203. See also I. L. Smolenskii, 'Interessnyi iuridicheskii vopros,' *Rebus*, 32, 1913: 5-6; 'O chlenovreditel'nykh seansakh: k zametke g-na Smolenskogo,' *Rebus*, 32, 1913: 5.

<sup>18</sup> On the decline, see Vladimir Dal', *O poveriiax, sueveriiakh i predrassudkakh russkogo narod.*, St. Petersburg, 1996; Linda Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief*, New York 1992; N. Kh., 'K voprosu o religioznykh vozzreniakh krest'ian Kaluzhskoi gubernii,' *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 4, 1892: 210-5.

<sup>19</sup> This development also relegated the devil, the explanation favoured by the Orthodox Church, into the background.

What was believed to have caused events in haunted houses and how did newspaper accounts make sense of such phenomena as those reported of Florentsov's apartment?

While neither the *domovoi* nor the devil were regarded as plausible explanations for a haunted house by urban observers, the presence of a female servant provided a first suspect for future investigations. As we have seen, Florentsov's son-in-law suspected the servant Sasha of having some special relation to the cause of their troubles (he had her lie on the bench to see whether she could provoke some of the inexplicable phenomena). The reporter of the Kazan case was also able to establish that 'she was a very nervous and sensitive person, liable to suffer from hallucinations.'<sup>20</sup>

Other accounts were much more explicit in placing sole responsibility for the sudden blows and raps on the newly hired *niania* (nursemaid). In a case from St. Petersburg region, the peasant Feodos'ia Spiridonova was eager to inform a journalist that they had taken on 'the 11- or 12-year-old Mariia Semenova, a peasant girl from the village of Berezniaki to serve as *niania*. About a week later the events started: blows to the windows, which originated apparently from inside the frames.'<sup>21</sup> The Spiridonovs followed their neighbours' advice and placed an icon against the windows, but the holy picture was soon thrown to the floor. Events took on a more threatening turn when knives began to move by themselves; one of the knives even drove itself into the wooden floor. Wherever Mariia was, some supernatural event was bound to take place:

When, for example, she approached the oven [...] all the utensils [near it] began to move and fall over. Logs that lay on the oven fell to the ground without any obvious reason and in one instance a loose brick was thrown from the top of the oven at the girl. [...] When the girl sat on a bed, the bed began to move beneath her, and when she sat on a bench, an unknown force tried to lift the bench. The bench shook and knocks were heard inside it.<sup>22</sup>

The Spiridonovs asked the local priest to hold a prayer and an exorcism but when these failed to end the disturbances, they saw no other option than to dismiss Mariia. All supernatural events ceased after she left.<sup>23</sup>

These reports and many more shared the assumption that if inexplicable or supernatural events occurred in someone's living quarters, a female domestic servant was a plausible suspect. This is not to say that female servants were openly suspected of fraud or of witchcraft. Instead loosely defined and rarely voiced mediumistic abilities of the housemaid in question were considered a potential cause of supernatural events. In short, maids were frequently suspected of being mediums and thus of facilitating spirit activity. How the maids themselves might have explained these events was irrelevant to the newspaper reporters. In their accounts, the female servants were clearly seen as the prerequisite, without whose presence none of the mysterious phenomena would have occurred. After inexplicable phenomena were recorded, a maidservant was brought into direct relation with them. Journalists usually mentioned that she suffered from a nervous illness. It was upon the departure of the maidservant that the inexplicable phenomena suddenly ceased.

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<sup>20</sup> B., 'Mediumicheskie iavleniia v Kazani (Korrespondentsiia 'Rebusa'),' : 30.

<sup>21</sup> Bar. A. Pritvits, 'Samoproizvol'nye mediumicheskie iavleniia v derevne Iugantovo Luzhskoi volosti, Iamburskogo uezda, S.-Peterburgskoi gubernii,' *Rebus*, 15 1896: 88-9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 88-9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The prominent role of servants is one peculiarity of Russian hauntings. Although there were reports of haunted houses in late nineteenth-century Britain as well, these were of a very different quality. British ghosts were far less violent than their Russian counterparts. They usually appeared to the landlord and his family as shady figures, but neither did they break dishes nor did they physically harm members of the household. Moreover, in Victorian Britain, servants were not seen as having any special relation to the unusual phenomena. Instead, suicides or 'terrible crimes' were thought to be their source.<sup>24</sup>

The Russian cases raise several questions. What role was attributed to gender in these hauntings and in the tsarist empire more broadly? After all, servants with suspected mediumistic abilities were inevitably female. What was the status of maidservants in the late tsarist household? How can these events be interpreted as a social phenomenon? What is the importance of servants' hysterical disposition?

The women question (*zhenskii vopros*) had concerned Russian intellectuals since the era of the Great Reforms in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>25</sup> After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, patriarchy and the subjugation of women were regarded as a leftover of serfdom, and wives and daughters, especially of the lower classes, became symbols of this oppressive system.<sup>26</sup>

Servants epitomised the downtrodden lower-class woman for many observers in fin-de-siècle Russia. The exemplary domestic servant was characterised by her unobtrusiveness, submissiveness and her devotion. In the post-reform years, domestic service became predominantly female: preference was given to women, because they were the more easily governable and physically controllable.<sup>27</sup> Observers agreed that the conditions of domestic service were extremely harsh. Maids led the most degrading life of all working women. They were totally subjugated to their employers and often experienced sexual abuse by their masters. Female servants 'were permitted neither visitors, including legal husbands, nor holidays.'<sup>28</sup>

Despite or because of the strenuous life of their maids, employers increasingly saw the lower stratum in general and domestic servants in particular, as a latent but constant threat. Historical research has shown how discourses on thieving servants, uncontrollable hooligans and sexually immoral paupers both mirrored and fed these fears.<sup>29</sup> The spectre of the maid who governed the country haunted well-to-do Petersburgers and found its way into satirical drawings.

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<sup>24</sup> W. F. Barrett et al., 'First Report of the Committee on Haunted Houses,' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, I, 1883, pp. 101-5; R. C. Morton, 'Record of a Haunted House,' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* VIII, 1892: 311-32.

<sup>25</sup> On the women question, see Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*, Princeton 1978; Linda Harriet Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917*, London 1984; Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D. Worobec (eds.), *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, Berkeley and Oxford 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Christine D. Worobec, *Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period*, Princeton 1991.

<sup>27</sup> Angela Rustemeyer, *Dienstboten in Petersburg und Moskau 1861-1917: Hintergrund, Alltag, Soziale Rolle*, Stuttgart 1996: 94.

<sup>28</sup> L. N. Lenskaia, *O prisluge*, Moscow 1908:11. Cited in Rose L. Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society, 1880-1914*, 2 ed., Berkeley and London 1986: 62.

<sup>29</sup> Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*; Neuberger, *Hooliganism*; Rustemeyer, *Dienstboten*.

Figure 1<sup>30</sup>



The image of the wayward and sexually permissive lower-class woman, moreover, echoed older traditions of Russian culture. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rural communities, women believed to be in contact with demons or to be witches were usually widows, wives of soldiers or, in the nineteenth century, wives of migrant workers, i.e. women whose spouses were absent. Similarly, in fin-de-siècle Russia, *klikushestvo* (demon possession) was explained with sexual frustration.<sup>31</sup> Maidservants in cities suspected of causing supernatural phenomena had much in common with rural witches or *klikushi*. They were outsiders and they lacked male companionship. This did not prevent young women from becoming a potentially disruptive element within the household. In the 1880s, sexual relations between employers and servants were a common topic in Russian literature.<sup>32</sup> Female servants were thus associated with issues of sexuality.<sup>33</sup> The uneasiness with regard to migrant

<sup>30</sup> The drawing is entitled 'What the job agency will soon turn into'. The central sign in the picture reads 'City bureau for the selection of "mistresses"'. On the table lies *the Directory of Mistresses in St. Petersburg*. The employers hand reference letters (*attestaty*) to the servants. 'Na zlobu dnia: Vo chto skoro prevratitsia "biuro dlia naima prislugi"', *Peterburgskaia gazeta: Illiustrirovannoe prilozhenie*, 14 December 1900: 409.

<sup>31</sup> Worobec, *Possessed*: 94, 170-1.

<sup>32</sup> Rustemeyer, *Dienstboten*: 144.

<sup>33</sup> On upper class anxieties regarding lower-class girls and their sexuality in fin-de-siècle Russia, see Laurie Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters: Prostitutes and their Regulation in Imperial Russia*, Berkeley and London 1995; Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*.

women of allegedly loose morals was mirrored in reports about haunted houses. In these reports, the girls that allegedly caused supernatural phenomena were always young, from a lower-class background and caused havoc in the houses of their respectable employers.<sup>34</sup>

Well-to-do Russians, however, also feared that domestics would become thieves, and stories of servants who – in some cases successfully – plotted to assassinate their employers also tormented the country's elites.<sup>35</sup> The prominent role of knives in these accounts needs to be viewed in the context of such fears.

Employers' fears about dangerous servants are illustrated by stories of haunted houses which sometimes echoed criminal cases. Mysterious raps were thus associated with crime and rebellion. In a prominent court case from 1870, the civil servant Gorodetskii and his wife sued their former cook Marfa Zakharova. The Gorodetskii's had been out on Christmas Eve. When they returned home, they found their youngest child maltreated and severely injured.<sup>36</sup> In 1892, a newspaper report in *Novoe vremia* resembled Gorodetskii's case to an astonishing degree. On New Year's Eve, Professor L. and his wife returned home from a party to find their servants upset, the furniture in the living room smashed to pieces and their little daughter slightly injured. According to one servant's account, she was feeding the little girl when suddenly a supernatural power broke the lamp, shattered the furniture and suspended the daughter in the air.<sup>37</sup>

Suspecting servants of causing blows to walls and raps on window frames can thus be seen as an expression of the anxiety about lower-class rebelliousness. This was such a common fear that it was not only employers who suspected their servants of causing mischief with the help of supernatural powers. Similar suspicions were also often voiced by outsiders such as policemen, reporters and curious visitors.

However, a Russian maid who allegedly caused supernatural events in her master's apartment was far from practising open mutiny. Her rebellion took place within the cultural context that was restricted both by the prevalent notions of spiritualist belief and by fin-de-siècle notions about female illness and nervous disorder. The hysterical illness from which these servants allegedly suffered played an important part in haunted houses.

Fin-de-siècle culture throughout Europe and beyond was obsessed with uncovering the secrets of the mind and bringing hidden wishes and desires to light. It was the 'golden age of hysteria'.<sup>38</sup> Numerous investigations into the power of the mind were conducted and fostered an increased interest in hysteria, hypnosis and, of course, such psychic phenomena as spirit communication and telepathy. Hysteria and mediumistic abilities were closely linked in that hysteria was regarded as an essential predisposition for developing abilities that would enable communication with the spirits of the departed. Like mediums, hysterics were thought to possess heightened sensory abilities, hyperaesthesia, which facilitated thought-reading, telepathy, spirit communication and prophecy. Hauntings often coincided with altered states of mind among servants of the afflicted house. Sasha in Kazan for example lost consciousness when the mysterious events unfolded around her. Similarly, Pelageia Arbuzova, a maid in St. Petersburg, suffered from fits and fell into a trance-like state when the spirit of her deceased master allegedly smashed dishes and 'the heavy dining table

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<sup>34</sup> As Alex Owen has observed, trance mediumship oozed sexuality. The same was true for spiritualist practices in Russia. Owen, *Darkened Room*: 218; Bogomolov, *Russkaia literature*: 284.

<sup>35</sup> Rustemeyer, *Dienstboten*.: 50-2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>37</sup> Peterburzhets, 'S nekotorykh por,' *Novoe vremia*, 15 January 1892: 3.

<sup>38</sup> Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and its Interpretations*, Princeton, 1995: 15.

turned around and around with ease.<sup>39</sup> So common was the assumption that women, who suffered from nervous illnesses were the cause of supernatural events that the author of one article commented with bewilderment that the maidservant in question did not seem to suffer from any nervous conditions and was apparently healthy.<sup>40</sup>

Hysteria has been interpreted as an expression of cultural crisis, as an instance in which the desires, aspirations and ailments of a whole society are brought into the foreground.<sup>41</sup> This claim, if accepted, can illuminate the cases of haunted houses, which so fascinated readers in late tsarist Russia. These newspaper reports imply that when a maid entered the trance like state of mind, her innermost characteristics were brought into the open: rebellious acts were carried out and the downtrodden servant suddenly stood at centre stage. These cases are reflections of wide-spread fears and changing social values.

At the same time, however, servants with mediumistic powers did not bear responsibility for the threatening phenomena they allegedly incited. They were part of a cultural performance, which granted servants a restricted space for acts of rebelliousness but without threatening accountability.<sup>42</sup>

Maidservants, permitted to protest solely under the influence of supernatural guidance, were thus – unlike male strike-protestors – deprived of autonomous agency. They acted only through and within a cultural pattern of hysteria and mediumistic phenomena, which removed accountability. This corresponded to the prevalent notion that lower-class women were, unlike their socially and politically conscious and skilled brothers or husbands, not outspoken but ‘backward’.<sup>43</sup> Like *klikushi*, peasant women believed to be possessed by demons, maidservants in haunted houses symbolised the ‘out-of-control women.’ Their condition was the ‘female form of hooliganism’.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, to regard a man as the possible cause of supernatural events seemed totally implausible. Preternatural events in apartments and houses usually originated in what was generally regarded as female space: the kitchen. Kitchens and ovens figured most prominently in haunted houses. As another affected landlady put it, the supernatural events took place ‘only in the kitchen, under the roof and in the bathhouse. We have never noticed anything of this kind in the master’s cabinet.’<sup>45</sup>

The relationship of maids with the supernatural powers remained as unclear as that of *klikushi* with demons: both groups were neither clearly active nor obviously passive, neither good nor evil, neither innocent nor evidently guilty.

The Russian fascination with the supernatural at the turn of the century thus incorporated aspects of traditional rural culture, but adapted these to current fashions and to the urban setting in which they expressed contemporary anxieties.

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<sup>39</sup> Vas. B., ‘Nepokoinye doma v Peterburge i Moskve,’ *Rebus*, 27, 1908: 7-8.

<sup>40</sup> V. Khlopitskii, ‘Samoproizvol’nye mediumicheskie iavleniia v Varshave,’ *Rebus*, 16, 1897: 335. P. Ch., ‘O Vladikavkazskom mediume,’ *Rebus*, 23, 1904,: 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, ‘Die Vorführung der Hysterie,’ in Aleida Assmann and Heidrun Frieze (eds.), *Identitäten: Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität 3*, Frankfurt/Main, 1999: 243.

<sup>42</sup> On spirit possession, see Worobec, *Possessed*. On the cultural significance of narrative patterns see Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in 16th-Century France*, Stanford 1987; Mannherz, Julia. ‘Geistererscheinungen und ihre Zeugen: Geschichtenerzählen zwischen Positivismus und Spiritismus im ausgehenden Zarenreich.’ *WerkstattGeschichte*, 1, 2007: 79-93.

<sup>43</sup> Glickman, *Factory Women*.

<sup>44</sup> Worobec, *Possessed*, pp. xii, 186.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Nepokoinyi Dom: Pis’ma iz Lanshevskogo uezda,’ *Rebus* 18, 1899: 279-80, 289-90, 296-7, 303-4, 297.



However, it is important to remember that most of the news on haunted houses was published in the popular press and therefore met the demands of a wide readership. The alleged supernatural involvement in these ‘real’ reports reached a readership that wished to be thrilled and entertained. Masters and mistresses of servants might have found their fears about unruly maids expressed in these reports, a literary technique that until today is a potent reason for a topic’s appeal. These reports, however, were not only an expression of the anxieties caused by female servants. We can assume that stories about landlords who had become powerless in their own homes were a popular read among those who could not afford to live in a spacious apartment, let alone hire a servant. Apart from providing entertaining stories about knockings, raps and misbehaving kitchen utensils, spirits in these newspaper articles also mocked the authorities of church and state. As we have seen, *molebny* were interrupted by flying objects and carnivalesque acts ridiculed sacred objects such as icons. The soldiers in Kazan were ridiculed by being drawn into a battle with potatoes, while the retired officer Florentsov and his friends from the police corps were unable to assert their authority. Spiritualists might have been interested in these reports because they depicted manifestations of their beliefs. However, it is likely that readers with or without spiritualist convictions simply relished stories in which priests and other representatives of officialdom struggled to assert their authority. This appeal of an unruly element is especially noteworthy in Florentsov’s case from Kazan, in which a representative of the military, closely associated with the disliked police, his officer friends, his landlords and the clergyman are depicted as unable to control potatoes.

### *Rational explanations*

Like so many cultural expressions in fin-de-siècle Russia, reports of haunted houses, were subject to change.<sup>46</sup> From about 1908, science was more frequently invoked when it came to explaining haunted houses. Electricity, which had newly been introduced into the daily lives of city dwellers, served particularly well as an explanation of formerly inexplicable phenomena. The role played by science in newspapers and tabloids was very similar to the role of science in popular literature. Jeffrey Brooks has observed that

science is often invoked when the reader is asked to accept something marvellous and mysterious without the aid of superstitious belief. In this sense, the popular literature might be considered antiscientific, since the use of science is more akin to magic than to logic.<sup>47</sup>

This was especially so in the case of electricity. Electricity and electrification were potent symbols of modernity in fin-de-siècle Russia, but electricity was simultaneously associated with the supernatural.<sup>48</sup> It is not surprising then, that electricity, which could so successfully combine the scientific with the mysterious, was used to explain haunted houses, often with a rational intention. A fine example of the use of science in newspaper reports published in 1911 can be found in *Volyn*.

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<sup>46</sup> Frank and Steinberg (eds.), *Cultures in flux*.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*, Princeton, NJ, 1985: 259-60.

<sup>48</sup> Lionel Declé, *The New Russia*, London, 1906: 161-2. A. Toporkov, ‘The devil’s candle: how artificial light perturbed turn-of-the-century urban Russia,’ *History Today*, 46, 1996: 34-6.

When unusual phenomena occurred in Mr Lysenko's Zhitomir home, the latter suggested the following explanation:

My house is located near the crossing of streetcar [lines]. During the days in question there was, obviously, an extraordinary accumulation of electricity, which ultimately found itself an outlet and because my house is the highest in the neighbourhood, the electricity swooped down on its roof from where its influence spread throughout the house.<sup>49</sup>

However, Mr Lysenko had to acknowledge that neither Mr Beker, the director of the electric power plant, nor the physicist Dr Dumanenskii found his explanation convincing.<sup>50</sup> Compared to Florentsov's reaction to supernatural phenomena in Kazan some thirty years earlier, Lysenko's approach is indicative of a considerable change in attitude. Florentsov's landlords, it will be recalled, chose the traditional approach of a public prayer, while Florentsov's son-in-law suspected the maid Sasha of possessing mediumistic abilities and Florentsov himself resorted to holding a séance. In contrast, Lysenko preferred what he considered to be a rational and scientific explanation.

What was the reason for the increasing attractiveness of rational explanations for haunted houses at the turn of the century? Jeffrey Brooks has argued that although popular superstitions still flourished in late imperial Russia, the belief in the power of supernatural forces was in decline. Brooks follows Keith Thomas in identifying the crucial factor for the decline of magic and the widespread dissemination of a more scientific approach in the growth of a notion of self-help.<sup>51</sup> Although this is certainly the case, I wish to add another interpretation. Brooks suggests that the appeal of supernatural explanations probably resumed again around 1910, but this is not so in the case of spiritualism.<sup>52</sup> The attraction of spiritualist explanations markedly decreased after 1905. This claim is corroborated by statements from the editors of the spiritualist journal *Rebus*. Viktor Pribytkov, editor until 1903, perceived a favourable attitude towards the movement among the general readership in the 1890s. Pavel Chistiakov, his successor, however, felt compelled to write a deeply disillusioned editorial in 1910. In this piece, Chistiakov enumerated the many factors that conspired to generate pessimism among the remaining spiritualists. The media had turned against them, financial support was running out and the editorial board was left with heaps of unsold copies of the journal. Followers of the movement bemoaned the fact that by 1912 spiritualist ideas had lost their appeal among the younger generation.<sup>53</sup>

The reasons for this decline are complex. One of them might be that the fashion of spiritualism had run its course, but there seem to be other, more complex explanations as well. Firstly, the popularity of spiritualism was undermined by the foreign odour of this Western import, not helped by the fact that spiritualism was propagated in Russia

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in *Rebus* as 'Nepokoinye iavleniia v Zhitomire,' *Rebus*, 30, 1911, pp. 5-6 (p. 6). For similar scientific explanations see V.M. Danilevskii, 'Telepaticheskoe iavlenie,' *Rebus*, 23, 1904: 3-5; B., 'Nepokoinye doma v Peterburge i Moskve.:', M. F., 'Tainstvennaia sila istseliaushchaia bol'nykh,' *Peterburgskii listok*, 1 July 1911: 3; 'Koloshenskaia chertovshchina,' *Peterburgskii listok*, 14 January 1916: 3.

<sup>50</sup> 'Nepokoinye iavleniia v Zhitomire,': 6.

<sup>51</sup> Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*,: 268. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, ed., Harmondsworth, 1991: 58-89.

<sup>52</sup> Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*: 267.

<sup>53</sup> V. Pribytkov, 'Vopros o spiritizme v Rossii,' *Rebus* 20, 1901: 4-6, 19-21, 30-2, 39-41, 45-7, 53-4, 61-2. 32; 'V. I. Pribytkov,' *Rebus* 29, 1910: 2-3; 'Po puti,' *Rebus* 31, 1912: 2-3.

by men with non-Russian names.<sup>54</sup> With the war against Japan in 1904/05, the star of spiritualism began to decline and the treatment of haunted houses changed dramatically. Secondly, developments on the labour market had an impact on the interpretation of haunted houses. 'The great strikes of 1905 generated a sense of power and optimism among workers.'<sup>55</sup> This self-assertiveness lingered on after 1905 and despite the conservative rollback, workers and servants continued to articulate their grievances. Two months after Bloody Sunday in 1905, a union of female domestic servants was founded in Moscow and domestic servants went on strike in the same year.<sup>56</sup> Although these professional associations were restricted to the larger cities, servants now expressed their dissatisfaction openly. Instead, unconventional and politically ambiguous movements like spiritualism became associated with the privileged and idle elites. In turning aggressively against the upper classes of society, the masses turned against spiritualist notions too. Social unity broke apart, and spiritualism could no longer provide a robust enough common ground for different layers of society to converge upon.<sup>57</sup> The same media outlets that had previously popularised spiritualism and played a major role in its dissemination, now used reports of occult phenomena to make fun of the gullibility of the rich and expose their 'bourgeois' pastimes as frauds. They did so frequently by referring to electricity as the 'true' cause of seemingly inexplicable events. In the post-1905 climate, haunted houses lost their anti-authoritarian connotations and spiritualism became associated with idle salon entertainment. One account, 'The Enigmatic House', published by *Peterburgskii listok* in 1913 is quite typical of this new treatment of supernatural phenomena. It tells the story of a poor tenant who successfully stages supernatural phenomena in his living quarters in order to get a reduction in rent from a spiritualist landlord.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

The shift in attitude towards spiritualism in the post-1905 years provided fertile soil for later misrepresentation of the movement as an essentially elite leisure-time pursuit. The fascination with spirit hauntings, however, was culturally important and had expressed diverse interests in the decades before the great social upheavals at the beginning of the twentieth century. Spiritualism and its attractiveness illustrate the intricacy of fin-de-siècle Russia: it simultaneously displayed the potential to unify and bring together people from the most different backgrounds, and it carved out a space in which social conflicts could be enacted.

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<sup>54</sup> Russia's most famous spiritualists were Aksakov, Butlerov and Vagner. Their names were quite clearly of Tatar, English and German origin.

<sup>55</sup> Glickman, *Factory Women*, p. 192f.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 243. Rustemeyer, *Dienstbote*: 176-7.

<sup>57</sup> These findings support Leopold Haimson's observations about the disintegration of social unity in the post-1905 years. Leopold Haimson, 'The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917,' *Slavic Review*, 1964-1965: 1-22, 619-42. This illustrates that the process of alienation from and hostility towards the bourgeoisie, which for the revolutionary year of 1917 has been termed 'Anti-Burzhui Consciousness' dates back at least a decade further. Boris Ivanovich Kolonitskii, 'Antibourgeois Propaganda and Anti-"Burzhui" Consciousness in 1917,' *The Russian Review*, 53, 1994: 183-196.

<sup>58</sup> Provintsiial, 'Tainstvennyi dom (rasskaz),' *Peterburgskii listok*, 2 June 1913: 3. This is not to argue that superstitious belief vanished because of electricity. Beliefs in supernatural influence still existed at this time, spiritualism, however, lost much of its appeal.

From the mid-1870s onwards, spiritualist beliefs and practices appealed to diverse groups and provided a roof under which different people could assemble. Spiritualism offered new visions of society by challenging traditional authorities and by offering social experimentation during the séance. Accounts of 'enigmatic houses' relished descriptions of figures of authority unable to assert their influence at home. At the same time, haunted houses provided space for ritualised drama, for careful disobedience and rebelliousness within the set pattern of hysteria and spirit communication. As ordinary Russians became more and more self-assertive in the years after the revolution of 1905, social unity broke apart and neither the social experimentation of the séance nor the sanctioned carnivalesque challenge of authorities in haunted houses satisfied social discontent. Mysterious phenomena were now explained in ways perceived to be rational and spiritualist notions were ridiculed in the popular press. In the preceding decades, however, spiritualism had aptly illustrated the complexities of Russian society, where weak unifying practices co-existed alongside expressions of social conflict.



# The Ukrainian Stundists and Russian Jews: a collaboration of evangelical peasants with Jewish intellectuals in late imperial Russia<sup>1</sup>

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The spread of the radical evangelical movement in southern Russia and Ukraine by the 1880s coincided with the activities of revolutionary intellectuals, who tried to exploit the anti-state feelings of persecuted evangelicals. Some of these revolutionaries were Jews. Because of anti-Semitic pogroms after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 in the southern Russian provinces many Jews tried to emigrate, while others tried to survive by converting to Christianity. The last development, which was called the movement of 'New Testament Jews' by Russians, converged with the evangelical movement in the Ukrainian provinces of Kiev, Kherson and Tavrida and influenced peasant religious dissenters as well. The Russian police discovered these connections first, but the Orthodox clergy and Russian conservative press used this information about the collaboration of Jews and Christian dissenters, who were called Stundists, for their ideological campaign against the evangelical peasants. The Jewish theme contributed to the construction of the anti-Russian image of the first Russian Stundists, who were Ukrainian peasants by origin and whose theology and religious practices were reminiscent of the West European Reformation. A return to the Hebraic origins of the Christian faith and an emphasis on the Jewish roots of Christian theology was a prominent feature of the entire European Reformation.<sup>2</sup> From medieval times Russian religious radicals shared the same interest in the Judaic religious background of the first Christian communities described in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. So-called 'Judaisers' ('Zhidovstvuiushchie') of medieval Russia emphasised the Judaic traditions of their Christian beliefs, including the celebration of the Sabbath rather than Christian Sunday.<sup>3</sup> Later on, during the eighteenth century in central provinces of European

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<sup>1</sup> The American Council of Learned Societies, IREX, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and Mellon Foundation supported financially this research, which is a part of a wider research project I worked on. See the detailed analysis of relations between the Stundists and Jews in chapter 7 of my book: Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917*, Baltimore 2004: 321-395.

<sup>2</sup> See: Lois Israel Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* New York 1925; Salo W. Baron, 'John Calvin and the Jews,' *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: from Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, ed. by Jeremy Cohen New York University 1991: 380-400; Armas K.E. Holmio, *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jews: the Birth of Protestant Jewish Missions* Hancock, Mich. 1949. Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* Cambridge 1979. Richard H. Popkin, 'Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism,' *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. Perez Zagorin, Berkeley 1980: 70-71; David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* Oxford 1982; Sergei Zhuk, 'La tradition hebraique': les Puritans, les Calvinistes hollandaise et le debut de l'ambivalence des Juifs dans l'Amerique britannique coloniale,' *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin. Approche comparative. Textes reunis M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet et E. Teiro* Paris 2003: 123-164.

<sup>3</sup> N. A. Kazakova, Ia. S. Lur'e, *Antifeodal'nye ereticheskie dvizhenia na Rusi XIV-nachala XVI v.*, Leningrad 1955; Ia. S. Lur'e, *Ideologicheskai bor'ba v russkoi publitsistike kontsa XV-nachala XVI v.*, Moscow-Leningrad 1955. See also new research: Mikhail V. Dmitriev, 'Joseph de Volokolamsk etat-il anti-Semite?' *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin. Approche*

Russia, their ideas and religious practices laid a foundation to the religious movement of 'Subbotniki' ('Sabbatarians'), who changed their holiday from Sunday to Saturday, introduced circumcision and denied the universal authority of the Orthodox Church hierarchy. Saint Dmitrii of Rostov (Dmitrii Rostovskii) wrote that Subbotniki 'celebrated Jewish Sabbath and did not worship Christian icons because they were influenced by Lutheran, Calvinist and Judaizers' ideas.' At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the Subbotniki movement spread to the south, to the new regions of Russian colonisation in southern Ukraine and northern Caucasus, where their ideas of 'Moses law' and 'Hebrew rituals' affected local Molokans and other religious dissenters. By 1812 Subbotniki became especially popular among the Cossack settlers in the Don Army and Terek regions. Some Molokans in Ukraine accepted Sabbatarian religious practices, which transformed the entire Molokan movement. During the 1820s-1830s, according to official calculations, there were more than 20,000 Subbotniki in the European part of the Russian Empire.<sup>4</sup> The first Russian Subbotniki introduced Sabbatarian ('Hebraic') theology and practices to the evangelicals among Russian and Ukrainian peasants and elaborated rituals based on the Old Testament, which became an important component of the popular Sabbatarian movement up to the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

The most numerous sect among the first evangelicals in the Russian Empire was that of the Ukrainian Stundists, who later on became predecessors of different evangelical Christian churches in southern Russia, including Baptists (Stundo-Baptists), Adventists and Pentecostals. From the outset this sect was related to the religious awakening in the German and Mennonite colonies. In it the evangelical movement among the German colonists converged with the religious revival among Orthodox peasants and produced a movement that contemporaries referred to as Stundism. Contemporary authors and historians noted this as a remarkable moment in the popular evangelical movement's development in the Russian Empire.<sup>6</sup> The German-speaking settlers brought Stundism to Russia as a part of the Pietist movement. The word derived from the German 'Stunde' (hours). At the beginning of the eighteenth century members of the German Pietist movement, followers of Philip Jacob Spener, organised the meetings in their houses for reading and discussion of the Bible during the special hours (Stunde) after church ceremonies. These Pietists from

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*comparative*, Textes reunis M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet et E. Teiro Paris 2003: 77-98 and Tat'jana A. Oparina, 'La polemique anti-juive en Russie au XVIIIe siecle,' *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin*, 165-182.

<sup>4</sup> Orthodox missionaries considered Sundukov, a peasant from a village of Dubovka in Saratov province, a founding father of 'Subbotniki' sect in imperial Russia. See: N. N. Golitsyn, *Istoria zakonodatel'stva o evreiakh (1649-1825)* St.Petersburg 1886, Vol. 1, 642; T. I. Butkevich, *Obzor russkikh sekt i ikh tolkov* Khar'kov 1910: 368 -387, 393. See also: Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* Ithaca, N.Y. 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii (hereafter – GARF), f.109, 1 ekspeditsiia, op.40, d.21, part 2, l.40-41. In the 1860s the creed of the Russian Sabbatarians who followed Hebraic theology and practices included: '1. A complete belief in various acts of the Holy Spirit; 2. Non-admittance of sinful people to the meetings; 3. A public repentance in front of the whole meeting or the elected person; 4. A celebration not only of New Testament holidays, but Old Testament biblical holidays as well (Sabbath). Following the old Jewish tradition, they kept observance of three such days: 1 September, Day of Labor (or Pipes); 10 September, Day of Purification, and 15 September, a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. They celebrate both the Old Testament and New Testament holidays according to the lunar calendar rather than the general Christian one.' *ibid.*, l.6-8ob.

<sup>6</sup> The development of Stundism has been covered in detail by both Russian and Western historians. See: Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* Bloomington 2005, and O.V. Beznosova (Kudinova), 'Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo Iuga Ukrainy (1850-1905)' Ph.D. diss., Dniepropetrovsk University 1998.

Württemberg, who were called the Stundist Brothers, brought their new religious experience to the German colonies in the Russian province of Kherson in 1817 where the German colony of Rohrbach became a centre of Pietist activity. The Pietist minister Johann Bonnekemper was the pastor of the Lutheran community in Rohrbach and a leader of the new Pietist Stundist movement among local Germans. From 1824 his meetings known as 'the Stundist meetings' laid a foundation for a broad Pietist movement among the German-speaking settlers of the province.<sup>7</sup> This German Pietist movement converged with religious revivals among the members of the Nazareth sect in the German colonies in Bessarabia during the 1840s and among Mennonites in the provinces of Ekaterinoslav and Tavrida during the 1850s. Along with the Western Baptist influences, which were brought by German missionaries to southern Russia during the late 1860s, these evangelical awakenings among the German and Mennonite colonists laid the foundation for the movement among Ukrainian peasants, who were called 'the Ukrainian Stundists' ('Khokhly-Shtundy') by Russian contemporaries.<sup>8</sup>

By the beginning of the 1890s thousands of peasants from the Ukrainian provinces (the overwhelming majority were ethnically Ukrainian) joined this evangelical movement. Beginning with only twenty members in 1862 the Stundist sect among the Ukrainian peasants grew to thousands and spread over southern and central Ukraine in the 1870s. During the 1880s Stundism reached the provinces of Tavrida, Ekaterinoslav, Poltava, Kharkov, Chernigov, Volynia and Podolia (there were 2,956 dissenters in the province of Kherson in 1886, 2,006 in the province of Kiev in 1884, 300 in the province of Ekaterinoslav). Overall, in 1885 the members of the Ukrainian Stundist meetings, who were registered by the local police, numbered more than seven thousand people.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> C. Bonnekemper, 'Stundism in Russia,' *Missionary Review of the World*, March 1894, vol.17, 203.

<sup>8</sup> The Ukrainian Stundists did not fit into an official scheme of dissident movement in Russian historiography. All historians now agree that eventually Ukrainian Stundism contributed to the development of the broad evangelical movement in Russia and the Soviet Union as well. However, the history of the Stundist peasants and their theology and religious practices is still unclear and confused. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century Russian observers of the Stundist movement were not sure about its real origins. The obvious similarities between German and Russian sectarians, who were both referred to as the 'Stundists,' confused both liberal and conservative authors. At the same time, all observers noted millenarian trends in the theology of Ukrainian peasant dissidents. The more insightful Orthodox scholars of Stundism, such as Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, Alexei Dorodnitsyn and Piotr Kozitskii, expressed their uncertainty about the origin of Russian Stundism in their listings of different views regarding various theories on Stundist roots in the Russian empire. See Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm* St.Petersburg 1889: 12-13, 42-43, 59-60; A. Dorodnitsyn, *Yuzhno-Russkii Neobaptism, izvestnyi pod imenem shtundy. Po offitsial'nym dokumentam* Stavropol 1903: 117, 122; P. Kozitskii, *Vopros o proiskhozhdenii yuzhno-russkago Shtundizma v nashei literature* St.Petersburg 1908: 3ff. According to their analysis, it is possible to single out the following points of view in the Russian literature on Stundism: 1) Stundism was primarily a Russian phenomenon and influenced by native Russian sects (Molokans, Shalaputs and Dukhobors); 2) although Stundism may have foreign (mostly German) origins, its development was dependent on the psychology of the Russian people; 3) Stundism was a product of German propaganda but other causes, which prepared the ground for it in the Russian countryside, were more important; 4) Stundism was entirely a product of German propaganda and the Germanization of the Ukrainian peasantry; 5) Stundism was not simply a product of Russian conditions or of the propaganda of German Stundism among the German colonists, but also a direct result of German Baptists' impact on southern Russian society.

<sup>9</sup> Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm*, 145, 147. According to the official report of the Kiev governor, there were 3,085 Stundists in the province in 1885. In the province of Kherson the local governor counted 3,049 Stundists in 1885. In Volynia the police registered from 36 to 65 Stundists. In the province of Ekaterinoslav by 1890 the police registered 267 Stundists. Before this 260 Stundists had returned to the Orthodox Church. Therefore between 1885 and 1890 we can calculate 527 officially



By 1889 the Kiev administration alone counted more than 3,500 Stundists and by 1892 there were 4,897 (predominantly Ukrainian) Stundists within its boundaries. The Stundists themselves estimated their figures at between 100,000 and 200,000 in 1882-83.<sup>10</sup> These figures are apparently exaggerated. The local administration and police in their secret annual reports usually presented far smaller numbers of local religious sects and dissenters. Based on calculations of these annual reports and their appendices, the number of Stundists had grown from 200 in 1872 to 5,002 in 1890 in Kiev province, from 20 in 1862 to 4,648 in 1890 in Kherson province, from 300 in 1888 to 1,000 in 1897 in Ekaterinoslav province. What these figures do not reveal is that Stundist influence was much greater than the numbers suggest. In fact, Stundists dominated the villages in which they comprised more than two percent of the local population, influencing no less than one third of population there.<sup>11</sup>

In his report to the tsar, the Kherson governor noted in 1890 that the Stundist sect spread 'on three fourths of the entire territory of the province.'<sup>12</sup> In 1890 Stundists lived in 167 localities in the province. The Kherson governor also noted their increasing organisational skills. 'The huge number of Stundist leaders (one for every 29 adult members),' the governor wrote, 'indicated the larger inner strength of this growing sect.'<sup>13</sup> By 1895 there were nearly 7,000 Stundists in the province of Kherson, according to official calculations.<sup>14</sup> The governor of Kiev also noted the growth of Stundism and criticised the Orthodox clergy's underestimation of the numbers of dissidents among Ukrainian peasants. By 1895 there were more than 6,000 Stundists in the province of Kiev.<sup>15</sup> Stundism had become, during the 1890s, the

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registered Stundists in the province of Ekaterinoslav. Between 1885 and 1890 the Kharkov police registered 240 Stundists among the local peasants. See: RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4546, l.836; d.4543, l.424ob.; RGIA, *Otchet Volynskogo gubernatora za 1885 god*, 8; *Otchet Volynskogo gubernatora za 1889 god*, 7; *Otchet Ekaterinoslavskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, l.371ob.; *Otchet Kharkovskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, l.607

<sup>10</sup> Russian journalists from a popular Moscow newspaper calculated in 1884 that there were 24,700 Stundists in Kiev province, 9,000 – in Kherson province, 7,500 – in Bessarabia province, 4,000 – in Ekaterinoslav province, and 1,000 – in Tavrida province. *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1884, No. 326. Compare with: KEV, 1885, No. 19, 902.

<sup>11</sup> See: Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm*, 134-6, 145, 147. All other scholars base their studies on the calculations of Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii. Compare with: A.I. Klibanov, *Istoria religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii (60-e gody XIX v. - 1917 g.* Moscow 1965: 208 ff. My calculations are based on data from: TsDIAU, f. 442, op.52, d.433, l.35, 36ob., 61-2; f.127, op.690, d.43, l.5ob.; f.442, op.53, d.357, l.14, 29; f.442, op.55, d.447, l.67-67ob.; f.442, op.623, d.364, l.36ob., 37. RGIA, *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1881 god*, p.8, 23,24; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1882 god*, p.8, 21-2; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1883 god*, p.8, 25-6; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1884 god*, p.7, 24; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1889 god*, p.27, 56-7.

<sup>12</sup> RGIA, *Otchet Khersonskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, 13. In the Russian original, the governor literally complained of 'the spread' of Stundism influence. [He wrote in Russian: 'Raion rasprostraneniia shtundizma okhvatyvaet okolo ¾ obshchei ploshchadi gubernii.']

<sup>13</sup> RGIA, *Otchet Khersonskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, 14. The majority of the Kherson Stundists were concentrated in Elisavetgrad district – 64 places: including 20 towns and cities, 42 villages and 105 rural settlements. The number of Stundists who had officially separated from the Orthodox Church comprised 4,648 people (including 2,169 children under the age of 21). The police discovered that 83 leaders ruled the Stundist communities of the province. Among these leaders 30 were called the ministers (*presvitery*), who performed the religious ceremonies, 'including the baptism of the children, the weddings, the communion and burial rituals.'

<sup>14</sup> RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4182, l.431-4.

<sup>15</sup> RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4868, l.138ob. According to his report, in 1890 the Stundist movement in the province of Kiev had increased by 131 members and comprised 5,002 activists. The governor noted an expansion of Stundism in 18 new localities of the province as well. The Orthodox clergy reported the figure of 4,681 Stundists the same year, i.e. 320 people less than the police detected. According to the report of the General Governor of the South Western Region (which included the provinces of Kiev,

most numerous evangelical movement among the rural population of southern Russia. According to our calculations, in the main provinces of the southern Russian Empire: in Kiev, Podolia, Volynia, Kherson, Tavrida, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Bessarabia, and Stavropol', and Astrakhan' between 1891 and 1895 the police registered no less than 20,000 Stundist activists.<sup>16</sup>

When German Baptism influenced Ukrainian Stundism in 1869, it resulted in its division in two parts: 1) Stundo-Baptism, which was more conservative in theology and religious practices and tried to reproduce the institutions of the German Baptist congregations in the Ukrainian countryside; and 2) more radical 'New' or 'Young' Stundism, which resisted the institutionalisation and formalisation of the movement and emphasised the unmediated spiritual communication of believers with God and millennial expectations of social justice and equality. The religious radicals made up a majority in Ukraine from the outset. According to the first reports from Kiev province in 1874, members of the radical branch of Ukrainian Stundism made up the overwhelming majority (85%) of detected Stundists there.<sup>17</sup>

Russian Jews participated in this evangelical movement from the early days of Stundism. A police officer from the Odessa district reported to the Kherson governor that in 1870 he discovered in the village of Adamovka a Jewish woman who had converted to Stundism.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1875 the Orthodox press noted the unusual activities of the Jews among the Kherson and Kiev Stundists. These Jews were attracted to Stundism 'because of its Protestant character,' the journalist wrote, and 'its stress on the inner spirituality which had disappeared from the Jewish religion long ago.' Therefore, along with the Ukrainian peasants, Jews from the southern provinces of Russia became active members of Stundist communities.<sup>19</sup> The first records of Kherson Stundists mention a seventeen-year old Jewish boy named Israel who 'had been invited to join Stunda and baptized into the new faith' and followed 'loyally everywhere' a leader of the Ukrainian Stundo-Baptists, Ivan Riaboshapka. Riaboshapka baptized this Jewish boy, who became one of the first Jews converted to the Baptist faith.<sup>20</sup> Another Jew, Joseph (Ios'ka) Zeeserman, a pub-owner in the village of Chaplinka (the province of Kiev) assisted another leader of the Ukrainian Stundists, Gerasim Balaban. The local Stundists and their co-religionists from neighbouring villages used Zeeserman's tavern for 'Stundist agitation' among peasants who visited it.<sup>21</sup>

The Orthodox missionary organisation of Kherson diocese in its report for the year 1887-88 described the proselytising activities of converted Jews, who became 'zealot Stundist preachers.' The Orthodox missionaries complained about 'one unknown Jew

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Podolia and Volynia), by 1893 in the province of Kiev alone between 5,500 and 6,000 Stundists lived in 200 localities. See in: RGIA, f.1276, op.17, d.189 (1911), l.88.

<sup>16</sup> RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4868, l.138ob. According to his report, in 1890 the Stundist movement in the province of Kiev had increased by 131 members and comprised 5,002 activists. The governor noted an expansion of Stundism in 18 new localities of the province as well. The Orthodox clergy reported the figure of 4,681 Stundists the same year, i.e. 320 people less than the police detected. According to the report of the General Governor of the South Western Region (which included the provinces of Kiev, Podolia and Volynia), by 1893 in the province of Kiev alone lived between 5,500 and 6,000 Stundists in 200 localities. See in: RGIA, f.1276, op.17, d.189 (1911), l.88.

<sup>17</sup> RGIA, f.1284, op.241, d.181. Calculations based on the material from: RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.21, l.275ob.-277ob.

<sup>18</sup> Episkop Alexii [Dorodnitsyn], *Materialy dlia istorii religiozno-ratsionalisticheskogo dvizhenia na iuge Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX-go veka* Kazan' 1908: 174.

<sup>19</sup> 'Izvestiia o shtundizme,' *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, 1876, No.1, 810-1.

<sup>20</sup> *Kievskaya starina*, 1884, N 10, p.316-7.

<sup>21</sup> *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev, 1884), vol. 1, 192.

who was preaching Stundism' in the village of Izhitskoe (Tiraspol' district) in March 1888. According to another report 'in the small village of Soldatskoie of Novoukrainskii district a Jewish preacher, who had been converted from Judaism to Orthodox Christianity before joining the 'Stunda', delivered purely Stundist sermons for local peasants.'<sup>22</sup>

The Russian secret police traced the dangerous relationship between Jews and Ukrainian peasants from the first Stundist meetings in the 1860s and 1870s. Famous revolutionary populists (both of Jewish and Russian origin) such as L. Deich, I. Fesenko, and E. Breshko-Breshkovskaia tried to organise revolutionary propaganda among sectarians, but their efforts came to nothing. In February 1888, Lazarev and Drovogub, two revolutionary populists, tried to settle among the Stundists from Zvenigorodka district and propagate socialist ideas among them. They were unable, however, to influence the peasant evangelicals because the police arrested them immediately after their arrival in the Ukrainian village.<sup>23</sup>

In the police materials Jews were linked to conspiratorial activities involving religious dissidents in other cases as well. In 1875 the Jewish populist Lev Deich lived with Tavrida Molokans and unsuccessfully tried to propagate socialist ideas among the members of this sect.<sup>24</sup> Other revolutionary Jews attempted to do this among the Kherson and Kiev Stundist peasants during 1874-75. The most alarming case of Jewish involvement was the Chigirin conspiracy of 1877, when at least three Jewish intellectuals – Lev Deich, Anna Rozenshtein and Mark Natanson – took part in an organisation of the peasant movement in the province of Kiev.<sup>25</sup> The Russian police discovered these connections first, but the Orthodox clergy and Russian conservative press used this information about the collaboration of Jews and Stundists for their ideological campaign against the evangelical peasants. The Jewish theme contributed to the construction of the anti-Russian image of the first Russian Stundists, who were Ukrainian peasants by origin.<sup>26</sup>

Because of the Jewish revolutionaries' involvement in socialist propaganda among Stundist peasants, the police were very suspicious of any contact between them and religious dissidents. Sometimes local literate Jews composed letters for Stundist peasants who had problems with grammatically correct writing. Despite the fact that such Jews were not engaged in socialist activism, the police still persecuted them. In March 1891, the administration of Kiev province submitted a request for the exile of Leiba Itskov Portnoi from Vasil'kov district. The local Stundists (who called themselves 'evangelical Baptists') from the villages of Romashki, Ol'shanitsa and Teleshovka (in Vasil'kov district) sent letters to the Russian Minister of Interior asking that they be allowed to hold their religious meetings for worship. When the police checked these letters, it turned out that the 'Stundist petition' and letters were composed and hand-written by the local Jewish 'resident' Leiba Portnoi and his twenty-one-year old son, Nekheim. On 29 March 1891, Portnoi was exiled by the police to Radomysl in the western part of the Russian Empire. According to the police papers, Portnoi was punished 'because Jews writing for Stundists was considered very

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<sup>22</sup> 'Otchet Odesskogo Bratstva Sv. Apostola Andreia Pervozvannogo za 1887-88 g. *Khersonskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1889, No. 4, 115.

<sup>23</sup> GARF, f.102, op.88 (1890), l.1ob.

<sup>24</sup> L.Deich, *Za poveka* Moscow 1926: 60, 66-7, 110-31, 134-5.

<sup>25</sup> Erich Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Russia* Cambridge 1995: 139.

<sup>26</sup> See: I. Strel'bitskii, *Kratkii ocherk shtundizma i svod tekstov, napravennykh k ego oblicheniyu* Odessa 1893: 17,22,198; Compare with other publications: 'Kommunisticheskaya propaganda v Rossii,' *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1890, No. 106, 2; 'Sotsialisticheskaya propaganda shtundizma,' *ibid.*, 1890, No. 183, 2; 'Stunda i eya protivogosudarstvennyi kharakter,' *Russkoe slovo*, 1895, No. 107, 1-2.

undesirable, especially since an unemployed Jewish person [without certain profession] composed various petitions and documents for [the ignorant local peasants]'.<sup>27</sup>

The police records from the 1870s until the February Revolution of 1917 show the unusually tolerant attitudes of Stundists towards Jews. While the Orthodox Ukrainian peasants participated in the infamous anti-Semitic 'pogroms' of 1881 and 1905, the Stundist peasants not only avoided any violence against their Jewish neighbours, but also tried to help them and invited them to their meetings for worship.<sup>28</sup>

The expectation of the Millennium and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ also explains the new and more tolerant attitudes of the radical peasant evangelicals such as the Maliovantys towards the Jews. The first followers of Kondrat Maliovanets tried to preach to the Jews about the Millennium. Like all the groups of the Radical Reformation, they considered the conversion of the Jews to Christianity as the main condition for the beginning of the Millennium. One Maliovanets, a peasant from the district of Vasil'kovka, visited on a regular basis the synagogue in the town of Belaia Tserkva from September 1891 to March 1892. He preached to the Jews about Maliovanets and the Millennium. But the local police stopped proselytising activities of this Maliovanets, and eventually sent him to the Kiev mental asylum.<sup>29</sup>

The most confusing for the police was a case of the 'Spiritual-Biblical Brotherhood' in Elisavetgrad (Kherson province) because both Jewish intellectuals and peasant Stundists participated in the activities of this organisation. At the end of 1888, the Russian secret police submitted its report with an analysis of the issues of the local periodical of the Russian Orthodox Church, published in Kherson. Police officers paid special attention to information regarding the anti-sectarian St Andrew Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox correspondent complained of the activities of the Jewish 'Spiritual-Biblical Brotherhood,' which involved Orthodox Christians and Stundist peasants. In the debates of the Orthodox missionaries with Stundists, he wrote, 'those Jews took the Stundist side and supported the sectarians in everything.' A police agent noted in his report a fragment from the Orthodox publication about the active participation of Jews in the Stundist meetings in Elisavetgrad area. He cited a sentence in this publication describing how 'during a meeting one pale Jew solemnly argued that the present day Orthodox Christian Church did not resemble the original Christ's Church of the first century AD and that Jesus Christ would drive out the

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<sup>27</sup> Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (hereafter – TsDIAU), f. 442, op.620, d. 22, p.1-3ob. As John Klier noted the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned about the risk of 'Judaizing' by peasants exposed to Jewish religious life and cultural influences. This concern of the Orthodox Church was translated into law in 1825. See John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the 'Jewish Question' in Russia* Illinois 1986: 166.

<sup>28</sup> This happened with the peasants of Zvenigorodka district in April 1882. TsDIAU, f.442, op.832, d.126 (1882), l.1.

<sup>29</sup> Ivan A. Sikorskii, 'Psikhopaticheskaya epidemia 1892 goda v Kievskoi gubernii,' Ivan A. Sikorskii, *Sbornik nauchno-literaturnykh statei... V 5-ti knigakh.* (Kiev, 1900), vol. 5, 78; *Privetstvie Russkomu narodu ot Kondrata Maliovanetsa* Moscow, 1907: 10, 11-2. For Ivan Sikorskii's influence on Russian psychiatry see Irina Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880-1930* Baltimore 2002: esp. 136-9. Compare with the confusing picture of these events in the recent article by Daniel Beer, 'The Medicalization of Religious Deviance in the Russian Orthodox Church (1880-1905),' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Summer 2004, Vol. 5, No. 3, 451-82. Beer obviously dismissed original documents about the movement of Maliovanets. Moreover, he mistakenly treated the Maliovantys as the Old Believers and called their leader not Kondrat, but Vitalii.

Russian people from their new churches as he had done before with the Jews in Jerusalem.’<sup>30</sup>

In response to requests from the administration of the Orthodox Church, the police began their own investigation. In December 1881 the head of the local police in Kherson noted the activities of Iakov (Iankel’) Mikhelev Gordin, a Jewish resident from Vitebsk, who had organised ‘the Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ in Elisavetgrad. In fact, Iakov Gordin pioneered the efforts of liberal Jewish intellectuals to create organisations for a cultural dialogue with Christian dissidents of the southern Russian Empire. His society particularly targeted the Stundist peasants.

Gordin is an interesting figure in the history of Russian and American Jewry. He was born on 1 May 1853 in Mirgorod in the Ukrainian province of Poltava to a poor Jewish family. Although he did not receive a formal college education, he was a talented student of both Jewish and Russian literature. Since 1870 he had been contributing essays and articles to various Russian periodicals. During the 1870s he worked as a farm labourer, longshoreman, travelling actor, teacher and journalist. He became a permanent author for such periodicals, as *Zaria*, *Nedelia*, and *Elizavetgradskii vestnik*, where he worked as an editor as well, and *Odesskie novosti*, where he published under the pseudonym ‘Ivan Koliuchii’ (Ivan the Sting). During his travels he met different people and visited Stundist meetings in the Ukrainian countryside. The police noted that Gordin was a close friend of the revolutionary populists who visited Elisavetgrad where he had lived since the late 1870s. He even published a novel ‘Liberal-Narodnik,’ in which he described his personal experience and his meetings with religious dissenters and populists.<sup>31</sup>

In 1877 Iakov Gordin invited all the progressively minded Jews of Elisavetgrad to establish a Jewish Bible society in the city. This society would unite those who ‘denied all religious dogmas and ceremonies and acknowledged only the moral doctrines of the Bible.’ Its members rejected ‘all mercantile pursuits, and endeavoured to live by physical labour, primarily by agriculture.’<sup>32</sup> The main goals of this society were the religious education of Jews, the transformation of Jews into farmers living on land, and the prevention of their further practice of usury and financial speculation.

Under pressure from the Orthodox clergy, the police reported on Gordin’s old connections in Elisavetgrad with the revolutionary circle of the ‘People’s Will’ (a populist organisation involved in the assassination of the tsar in 1881). The police also confirmed Gordin’s connections with the Ukrainian Stundists, who often visited his ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood.’ Moreover, the police learned that he lectured to Stundists on the political economy of Karl Marx. In May of 1890 a Kherson police officer tracked down revolutionaries, such as Galushkin (Teraspol’skii), Gaevskii, Afanasii Mikhalevich and Ivan Basovskii ‘who came to Elisavetgrad, in particular, to

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<sup>30</sup> A report of the Spiritual Affairs Department to Police Department authorised an investigation about Jewish involvement in Stundist activities: GARF, f. 102, op.84 (1888), d. 454, l. 2, l.2 ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.97. See the article: ‘O polozhenii sektantstva v Khersonskoi eparkhii,’ *Khersonskie eparkhial’nye vedomosti*, 1888, No. 21, 315-6.

<sup>31</sup> See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidor Singer New York 1904: Vol.6, 46; S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, Transl. by I.Friedlaender Philadelphia 1918: Vol. 2, 333-335; Kalman Marmor, *Yaakov Gordin* New York 1953, Nora Levin, *While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917* New York 1977: 143-6; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* Cambridge, Mass., 1981: 56-7; John Klier, ‘From Elisavetgrad to Broadway: The Strange Odyssey of Iakov Gordon,’ in *Extending the Borders of Russian History: Essays in Honor of Alfred J. Rieber*, ed. Marsha Siefert Budapest 2003: 113-25.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted from: S.M. Dubnow, *Op.cit.*, vol.2, 333.

propagate revolutionary ideas among Stundists.’ All these Populists were Jews! According to the police reports, ‘all revolutionary efforts to collaborate with Stundist peasants turned out to be a failure.’ That was why the disappointed Populists decided to combine their propagandist efforts among Stundists with their activities among local Jews, who in 1877 founded ‘an organization for Jewish artisans’ (the above-mentioned ‘Brotherhood’ with Gordin, Zlatopol’skii and Portnoi as their leaders). The Jewish populists even used the meetings of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ for their readings of Marx, Ferdinand Lassale and other Western socialists. They sent their own agents -- Vasilii Gorbunov, Vladimir Tsenkovskii and Pavel Levandovskii - - to the Stundist meetings and ‘by presenting Jesus Christ as the first socialist in world history, they tried to persuade the Stundists to quit the sect and join the revolutionary movement’.<sup>33</sup>

But the religious Jewish ‘Brotherhood’ and its leader Gordin did not approve of these populist efforts. Members of the organisation moved to the countryside and organised their own community on communist principles, following Lev Tolstoi’s ideas of non-violence. Gordin’s supporters rejected the violence and terrorism of the Populists and distanced themselves from revolutionary radicalism. The activists of the society, including Gordin himself, visited cities with a significant Jewish population, such as Odessa. They promoted ideas of cultural dialogue between Jews and Christians, and, for the Jewish community, agricultural activity and non-violence in politics.<sup>34</sup>

The Jewish members of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ also distanced themselves from the local traditionalist Jewish community. As the governor of Kherson province reported in January 1885, the local administration had already permitted this society to establish its own separate synagogue and elect its own rabbi in July 1884. The Ministry of the Interior initially supported this society because it rejected ‘Jewish nationalism and fanatical religiosity,’<sup>35</sup> and on 8 December 1888 the Ministry of Justice agreed to the Bible Brotherhood’s request to establish a register of births, separate from other Elisavetgrad Jews. This organisation also demonstrated its non-traditional Jewish character by attempting to appear more ‘civilised’ and ‘Russified.’ Jewish members of this society kept all their records ‘exclusively’ in the Russian language, and they rejected circumcision, prenuptial agreements and other old Jewish traditions as ‘barbarous customs.’<sup>36</sup>

In 1888 they elected the founder of their ‘Brotherhood,’ Iakov Gordin, as their new rabbi. They asked the local administration for special privileges for their agricultural community and demonstrated their innovative practices in the distribution of goods, mutual assistance, rejection of traditional circumcision and permission for marriage between Christians and Jews according to the ancient Hebrew rituals described in the Old Testament. Kalenik Kozhemiachenko and Larion Dragulenko, two Ukrainian Stundists, both former Orthodox peasants, participated in the meetings and followed the rules and rituals established by the Brotherhood. The marriage of Evgenii Gar, the Russian Orthodox doctor, and Rosa Fainzilberg, the Jewish obstetrician, according to the rituals of Brotherhood demonstrated the ideal of this society – the rapprochement

<sup>33</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter – RGIA), f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.36.

<sup>34</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), 38ob. The police especially mentioned Lev Tolstoi’s influence on Russian Jews.

<sup>35</sup> The Russian administration praised the goals of the new society, which ‘attempted to eradicate the coarse fanaticism and religious delusions in the Jewish masses.’ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.3-4ob.

<sup>36</sup> RGIA, f.1405, op.89, d.2269, l.1-1ob., 3-3ob.

of Christians and Jews. Members of the Brotherhood declared that their main goal was 'the spiritual and moral renovation of the Jewish religion, and introducing Jews to Christian teaching.'<sup>37</sup>

At first, the Russian police permitted the activities of the Jewish Brotherhood because it did not appear to be a dangerous organisation, especially after its conflict with the Jewish revolutionaries and its opposition to terrorism. According to police reports, the Brotherhood tried to create a version of Christian Tolstoianism among Elisavetgrad Jews and brought the pacifist evangelical groups, such as Stundists, into their improvised Judeo-Christian community. Only the persistent demands of the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church and conservative leaders of the Jewish community provoked police persecutions of the new Jewish agricultural community in the Elisavetgrad district. Police agents reported that the Jewish members of the 'Brotherhood' settled in the Ukrainian countryside and tried to establish contacts with local Stundist peasants 'without any terrorist goals.'<sup>38</sup> But new cases of socialist propaganda among the Ukrainian Stundists of Kherson and Kiev provinces during 1888-1891, and the disclosed connections of Evgenii Gar and Iakov Gordin with peasant evangelicals changed the police's attitude.

A police detective noted in 1890 the unusual popularity of Stundist ideas among young radical Jewish intellectuals such as Iakov Gordin, who visited numerous Stundist meetings in Kherson province. According to the police, these young Jews were influenced by populist ideas of socialism. As a result, they decided to combine the evangelical ideas of social justice with a communist utopia, but without political violence. Therefore, they tried to organise communist agricultural colonies in localities with a strong Stundist influence. On 18 June 1890, a police officer informed his superiors that in November of 1889 'prominent members' of the 'Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood' established an 'agricultural colony on communist principles in Glodossy [a famous centre of Ukrainian Stundism], got acquainted with local peasants, invited these peasants to their houses and read to them the Gospels with their own Jewish interpretation.'<sup>39</sup> The members of the 'Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood' followed Lev Tolstoi's interpretation of Christianity as well. Along with the Bible and socialist literature, they began to read and discuss Tolstoi's work. They even tried to put Tolstoi's ideas into practice in their colony. In 1889 they opened a building for the distribution of agricultural products among members who were in need and among local peasants. Simultaneously, the 'Biblical Brothers' used this building for reading

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<sup>37</sup> GARF, f.102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, l.20, 61ob., 65ob., 71ob.

<sup>38</sup> See about Stundist pacifism and rejection of revolutionary violence and terror in 'the manuscript, written by Timofei A. Zaiats' published in: *Materialy k istorii i izucheniyu russkogo sektantstva i raskola*, ed. Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич. Vol. 3. St. Petersburg 1910: 15-6. Russian priests worried about the positive example Stundist communities represented for Ukrainian and Russian peasants because 'sectarians reject violence and live like members of one family and in this regard they serve as an exemplary model of brotherly relations, help each other by advice and in a material way, and in their contacts they are tender and cordial.' *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 1899, July-August, 103.

<sup>39</sup> GARF, f. 102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, p. 4, 11, 19-21, 23-4, 57-57ob. In his report this officer noted, 'in November 1889 Isaac Finerman, a prominent member of the Jewish society bought two peasant houses, rented 20 desiatins of the land in the village of Glodossy in Elisavetgrad district, settled there with like-minded Jews having in mind the propagation of their religious anti-government notions among the adherents of the Stundist persuasion who densely inhabit this area. Finerman's wife, Khana Liubarskaia, Antolii Butkevich, Mark Goldfeld, Kelman Galitskii and his wife Roza Kogan, Izik Ostry and Isaia Burshtein, who followed after Isaac Finerman, were the most active propagandists among the settlers of this Jewish colony.' See also memoirs of the Russian Jew who converted to the Baptist faith and emigrated later to England: Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* London 1895: 109-111.

and discussions with the peasants about the Bible and Tolstoi's books. The Glodossy Stundists became active participants in these discussions. As the police officer noted, the practical peasants liked their new neighbours because the Jewish colonists helped them with medication and with 'various advice of a medical and agricultural character.' At the same time, the colonists disseminated the evangelical literature and tried to influence the Stundist peasants, as one officer noted, in 'a direction that was unreliable from the political point of view.'<sup>40</sup>

In August 1891, after a special investigation, the Department of Police came to a final conclusion about the negative results of the 'Biblical Brothers' activity among the Stundists. The police had confirmed the spread of the socialist ideas among the religious radicals. As a result, they closed the 'Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood' on 7 October 1891 and cancelled the election of a new rabbi for a new synagogue established by Gordin's adherents. Moreover, the police agents began a secret surveillance of Gordin and ordered his arrest in January 1892. But the police missed their chance. Gordin and his sixty followers had immigrated to the United States a year earlier and had become American citizens. Nevertheless, the secret police ordered frontier-guards all along the Russian border to arrest Iakov Gordin as 'a dangerous criminal', if he appeared, even if he was carrying a US passport.<sup>41</sup>

Iakov Gordin, as far as we know, never returned to Russia.<sup>42</sup> Gordin, who was convinced that 'the only remedy for Jewish persecution was economic reconstruction,' tried to establish a Tolstoian-type agricultural colony in America for Russian Jews. But his attempts failed. Eventually he settled in New York City and became a famous Yiddish playwright and writer for the local radical press. Until his last days, he played an important role among New York's socialists and kept the old traditions of his Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood alive among Russian-speaking Jews. In his works and lectures he resisted any kind of nationalism, including Zionism. He also rejected political violence (even in the name of socialism). Gordin remained convinced that the Judeo-Christian ideal of the Bible pointed to the friendship of all nations, rather than to the superior position of one particular ethnic group.<sup>43</sup>

In 1882 the young Jewish intellectuals in Odessa made another attempt to establish a cultural dialogue between Jews and Christians. Iakov Priluker, a Jewish teacher from Odessa, followed Gordin's example and organised the group of 'New Israel,' which was open to both Christians and Jews. As Semion Dubnow has noted, 'New Israel' followed only the teachings of Moses 'and rejected the Talmud, the dietary laws, the rite of circumcision, and traditional forms of worship; the day of rest was transferred from Saturday to Sunday; the Russian language was declared to be the 'native' tongue of the Jews and made obligatory in everyday life; usury and similar distasteful pursuits were forbidden.'<sup>44</sup> As with the case of Gordin's group, a majority of the Jews did not support the idea of cultural dialogue. According to contemporaries, as well as historians, the Russian Jews opposed Gordin's and Priluker's experiments. They accused Gordin and Priluker of 'seeking to win from the Russian government those equal rights denied to the Jews collectively.' As conservative critics in the Jewish

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<sup>40</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.118-9ob. During the 1880s these Christian Jews even tried to establish a Baptist colony in the Crimea. See: Christopher M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia 1728-1941* Oxford 1995: 246.

<sup>41</sup> GARF, f.102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, l. 60-1, 65-6, 71, 73, 90-1.

<sup>42</sup> See a different opinion: John Klier, 'From Elisavetgrad to Broadway,' 113-25.

<sup>43</sup> For his socialist ideas see Ezekiel Lifschutz, 'Jacob Gordin's Proposal to Establish an Agricultural Colony,' *The Jewish Experience in America*, Ed. by Abraham J. Karp New York 1969, vol. 4, 253-64; Nora Levin, *Op.cit.*, 143-5.

<sup>44</sup> S.M.Dubnow, *Op.cit.*, vol.2, 334.



community argued, 'reform of Jewish religious practice would be accepted by the masses [of Jews] only if based on the Talmud and sanctioned by established rabbis.'<sup>45</sup> After the pogroms of the 1880s, Russian Jews became preoccupied by the problems of physical survival. A mass emigration from Russia was a more realistic solution for the majority than the utopian projects of Jewish-Christian communities. Only a radical minority of Jewish intellectuals, who had been involved already in revolutionary activities of Russian intellectuals, joined Gordin's and Priluker's organisations. When the police stopped the activities of the 'New Israel' in Odessa at the end of the 1880s, Iakov Priluker emigrated to England, joined one of the local Protestant congregations, and devoted his life to Christian missionary activities among the Jews.

Attempts to establish new relations between Jews and evangelical peasants resulted in the conversion of some of these Jews to Christianity. As a result of this cultural dialogue with Russian evangelicals, a new movement began among young Jewish intellectuals, whom Russian contemporaries called 'New Testament Jews.' This movement converged with the evangelical movement of Ukrainian peasants and demonstrated again the international character of the religious revival, which only confused its outside observers. The participation of the Jews in the evangelical movement also influenced the peasant dissenters, who developed more tolerant and more cosmopolitan attitudes.

The most important representatives of the New Testament Jews were the members of the group established by Iosif Rabinovich in 1884 in Kishinev (Bessarabia). As the governor of Bessarabia reported to the Ministry of the Interior on 3 November eleven Jews from Kishinev requested permission to establish a community separate from the Old Testament Jews. Their community included the Jews who believed in Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Their leader, Iosif Rabinovich, entered a special Protestant theological seminary in Berlin (Germany), converted to Christianity, and was ordained as a 'Congregationalist minister' in March 1885. In Russia he prepared for the publication of four books about the Christian Jews and submitted the manuscript of these books to a censor. At the same time, he established connections between his 'New Testament Israelites' and local evangelicals and Orthodox Christians. The governor of Bessarabia supported his activities among Bessarabian Jews and asked his superior in St. Petersburg to satisfy Rabinovich's request for the official registration of his 'sect' and publication of his books. Rabinovich planned to expand the activities of the New Testament Jews to other provinces of the Russian Empire and to attract the young Jews to Christianity. Therefore he planned for a propagandist 'literature and special schools for Jews who would join Christianity.'<sup>46</sup>

The Ministry of the Interior consulted the Holy Synod about Rabinovich's 'New Testament Israelites.' Meanwhile, the local Orthodox clergy and Kishinev landlords submitted their complaints about Rabinovich's activities among the peasant population of the province. According to these complaints, the movement of New Testament Jews 'recast all Christian principles in their own Jewish fashion,' and brought 'obvious German influences to the Russian countryside,' confusing the local Orthodox population. In their letters to the Holy Synod, Russian conservatives, who knew about his graduation from a German theological institution, treated Rabinovich as a German spy and portrayed him as 'the secret agent of German imperialism and the German Protestant Church.' The Holy Synod asked the police to stop the anti-

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<sup>45</sup> S.M.Dubnow, *Op.cit.*, vol.2, 334.

<sup>46</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.1, 11-11ob., 14-5, 16-7, 22-3. The detailed description of Rabinovich's plans is presented in a special police report 'The Religious Movement among the Jews in the South of Russia.' *Ibid.*, l.45-83.

Russian activities of Rabinovich and his Jewish adherents. In 1886 the secret police began a special investigation of the case of the 'New Testament Israelites,' but found nothing criminal in Rabinovich's activities. Nevertheless, K. Pobedonostsev, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, who was called by historians 'the symbol and the author of Alexander III's program of reaction,'<sup>47</sup> insisted on banning the New Testament Jews' movement in southern Russia. Pobedonostsev explained to the officials of the Ministry of the Interior that it was pointless to permit officially 'the activities of Rabinovich sect in the localities noted for the mass spread of Baptism and various rationalist sects like the Stundists.' According to Pobedonostsev, 'this sect promoted a new religious dissent among Russian citizens and their defection from Orthodoxy.' Therefore, he recommended that Rabinovich join the officially permitted Protestant church in Russia rather than establish a new sect. On 4 August 1886 the Holy Synod refused to grant Rabinovich's request and banned all his publications. Nevertheless, Rabinovich tried to persuade the local administration that his activities were legal. He stopped his contacts with the Stundist peasants and in December 1888, he wrote to the Minister of the Interior with an explanation of his intention to promote a rapprochement of Jews and Christians. He even agreed to register his sect with the police and to follow the rules and requirements of the Orthodox Church. But the Ministry and the Department of Police did not want to contradict the Holy Synod. The police were influenced by the scandalous rumours about Gordin and Priluker's Jewish organisations, and they feared new socialist and German propaganda among the peasants.<sup>48</sup>

However, the police could not sever the ties of the New Israel sect of Rabinovich with the Stundists in Kishinev. During the 1890s, the Christian Jews and Russian and Ukrainian evangelicals received religious literature through the German co-religionists of Rabinovich. The Stundist peasants regularly visited meetings for worship in Rabinovich's house in Kishinev. Nikita Sharakhovich, one of the Russian followers of Rabinovich, played a prominent role in maintaining contacts with dissident peasants. In 1895 the local clergy complained to the governor of Bessarabia about new cases of defection from the Orthodox Church under the influence of the 'New Israel' and the Kishinev Stundists. As it turned out, all suspected Stundists, including Sharakhovich, were using the meeting house of Rabinovich for 'Stundist' propaganda among the local Orthodox peasants. In December 1895, the district court of Kishinev sentenced Sharakhovich and his co-religionists to imprisonment for their Stundist propaganda among Orthodox Christians. As we can see, during the 1890s, Kishinev, along with Odessa, became an important centre in the expansion of the evangelical movement among the rural population of southern Russia.<sup>49</sup>

This movement connected the New Testament Jews, radical intellectuals, and peasant religious radicals in one mainstream of opposition to Russian Orthodoxy and to the tsarist administration as well. As it turned out, all these groups participated in the same 'eschatological' discourse, and shared the same belief concerning the end of 'this sinful world of social injustice' and the ultimate destiny of mankind. Socialists,

<sup>47</sup> James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* New York 1966: 439.

<sup>48</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l. 24, 34, 41-4, 47, 102-7ob. See also a biographical study of Rabinovich in English: Steven J. Zipperstein, 'Heresy, Apostasy, and the Transformation of Joseph Rabinovich,' *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, Ed. by Todd M. Endelman New York 1987: 206-31. Compare with Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* Edinburgh, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> RGIA, f. 796, op.176, d. 2145, l.1-8, 10-4.

radical evangelicals and New Testament Jews believed in the possibility of 'a new human Paradise on Earth' without exploitation and humiliation.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, all these radicals viewed the future society as a congregation of individuals, based on principles of moral purity and human dignity. According to their eschatological dreams, such a society would have no racial or ethnic hatred. This ideal attracted intellectual radical Jews, who took part in the Russian revolutionary movement and collaborated with peasant evangelicals as well.

Under the influence of different Western Christian missionary organisations some Russian Jews converted to Christianity. Moreover, the leaders of the local Ukrainian Stundists and Baptists, such as Riaboshapka and Balaban, invited Jews to join the evangelical movement and convert to the Baptist faith.<sup>51</sup> The police worried about cases of Jewish conversion to Stundism and Baptism. For instance, from the 1880s to 1910s they followed closely the formation of the Jewish evangelical organisation in Odessa. Its agents analysed publications of the Jewish newspaper *Zions Freunde*, which concerned the activities of Jews who preached for the evangelical Christians. They found out that Isaac-Leon Rosenberg, an Odessa Jew, regularly preached evangelical sermons at the Stundist meetings for worship every Tuesday and Friday evening. During these meetings in 1908-1909, the police counted that forty Stundists usually visited the 'meeting house with the Jewish preacher' on 23 Kouznechnaya Street in downtown Odessa. As the police discovered, the Ukrainian Stundists and Baptists used to meet with local Jews in other meeting houses of Odessa as early as 1891.<sup>52</sup>

The police documented the convergence of New Testament Jews and Stundo-Baptists. One police agent reported that the Jewish Baptist Christian community in Odessa had a 'Jewish priest Rosenfeld who was preaching Christian sermons exclusively in Hebrew.' The Russian administration worried about this Jewish involvement in the Christian sectarian movement, because 'given the Jewish inclination to political intrigues, the Jewish intrusion in the Russian sectarian movement could turn these sectarians to an undesirable anti-Russian political direction.' The administration of the Russian Orthodox Church informed the police about four Jewish Baptist ministers in southern Russia, but the police found only three -- Vladimir I. Melamed, Barukh N. Shapiro and Leon Rosenberg, who all served as Baptist preachers for local Stundo-Baptist communities. In addition, the police discovered that Rosenberg, a Jewish shopkeeper from Odessa, corresponded with another Christian Jew, Samuil Vilshenzon, an agent of the London Biblical Society, who sent money and literature to Jews and Stundists in the Odessa district.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See this description in memoirs of different participants in the events such as the Ukrainian Stundist Tymophii Zaiats and New Testament Jew Iakov Priluker. The adherents of Lev Tolstoi, P.Biriukov, and V.Chertkov used their periodicals published abroad for promoting principles of religious toleration. They published letters and other materials about persecution of sectarians in Russia. The most active among Chertkov's correspondents was the Ukrainian Stundist peasant, Tymofii Zaiats, who was exiled to Siberia for his non-Orthodox beliefs. In 1913 Anna Chertkova translated from Ukrainian into Russian, edited and published memoirs of T. Zaiats in Sytin's magazine: 'Zapiski Timofeia Zaitsa,' *Golos minuvshogo*, 1913, No. 8, 152-76, No. 10, 149-74, No. 11, 162-93, No. 12, 168-83. Compare with: Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* (London, 1895), 109-11.

<sup>51</sup> Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria*, 105ff.

<sup>52</sup> Rosenberg was a respected bookseller in Odessa. According to his announcement he sold exclusively 'Biblical spiritual-moral' books. See: TsDIAU, f. 268, op.1, d.448 (March 19-November 3, 1909), l.14, 16.

<sup>53</sup> TsDIAU, f. 268, op.1, d.448 (March 19-November 3, 1909), l.17, 18-23ob.

In November 1902, in the village of Snegourovka (Vasil'kovka district of Kiev province), the police agents arrested a group of 'enthusiastic' Stundist peasants who were waiting for 'the works and performance of the Holy Spirit.' Among the 126 spectators of this 'performance' at least two were Jewish. One of them was 'a Jewish resident of town Korsun' (Kanev district, the province of Kiev) Berko Ievsei Gershkov Ostrovskii, who called himself a Stundist and who had been arrested as a Stundist on April 10 [1902];' the other was 'a subject of the Austrian crown, a baptized Jew, Piotr Kramar', who had converted to Greek Roman Christianity (Uniate Church) from Judaism.' As it turned out, these Jews were connected to the New Testament Jewish movement, and they brought new religious literature and money to local Stundists.<sup>54</sup>

The Orthodox press and police shared the fear of foreign (Jewish and German) influences on the Orthodox peasants. All observers noted that the Stundists were different 'ethnographically' from their Orthodox peasant neighbours.<sup>55</sup> In their cultural protest, the Stundists preferred to associate with German colonists or even Jewish city dwellers rather than with their Orthodox peasant neighbours. 'The German colonists live much better than the Orthodox peasants,' Stundists told the Orthodox missionary, 'therefore we prefer to live like the Germans and that is why we join the German nation.'<sup>56</sup> They cut off all relations with the Orthodox peasant community, which they associated with 'heavy drinking, corruption, theft, violence, adultery and sloth.' They used the model of the German colonists' lifestyle to construct their new social identity.<sup>57</sup> The denial of their local Ukrainian identity was so evident among the Ukrainian Stundists, that some authors called them anti-Ukrainian:

The Stundists removed all elements of Ukrainian folk culture from their life. They changed their morals, customs, character and songs. Even their language changed – it became a strange mixture of Ukrainian, German, Polish and literary Russian. Stundists suppressed any expression of the folk culture – Ukrainian songs, dances, customs and dress. There is no sound of a folk song or sign of traditional Ukrainian folk rituals in the localities where Stundists live. It looks as if the Stundists aspire to become a separate nation, distinct from their Orthodox peasant neighbors.<sup>58</sup>

The denial of their peasant past and their traditional Orthodox peasant identity became the main component of the 'Stundist reformation' in the Ukrainian countryside. Stundists changed more than just their lifestyle. To contemporaries they looked more like European farmers who tolerated Jews than anti-Semitic Russian Orthodox peasants.<sup>59</sup>

This radical denial of the Orthodox peasant identity reached a peak among the Stundist followers of 'charismatic prophet' Kondrat Maliovannyi during the 1890s. In

<sup>54</sup> GARF, f.102, op.226, d.12, part 5, p.35; TsDIAU, f. 275, op.1, d.1 (1902), l.89-89ob.; *ibid.*, f.1597, op.1, d.7, l.8-8ob.

<sup>55</sup> Alexii, *Materialy*, 69, 70; see also about the stereotypes of Stundists in: GARF, f. 102, 3 d-vo, op. 88, d.281, l.1-2.

<sup>56</sup> On the ethnographic differences of the Stundist peasants see *Ekaterinoslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1890, No. 13, 342-343.

<sup>57</sup> Alexii, *Materialy*, 305.

<sup>58</sup> *Ekaterinoslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1889, No. 23, 658-9. The observers noted that these changes took place during ten years, from 1878 to 1888.

<sup>59</sup> RGIA, f.1284, op.222 (1902-1904), d.29, l.31, 35.

their expectation of the Millennium of Jesus Christ, the Maliovantsy stopped working and changed their diet, dress and hairstyle. They replaced all peasant aspects of their everyday life with practices that they had associated with an urban middle-class existence. They wore the fashionable dress of city residence. They used decorations, perfumes and make-up, which were unusual for Ukrainian peasants. Rather than following a peasant diet, they ate more sweets, candies and chocolate, and they drank tea and 'other non-peasant beverages.' They changed their manner of speaking, trying to avoid peasant words and imitate the language of the literate elite.<sup>60</sup> Members of the investigating committee discovered in May of 1892 that followers of Maliovannyi had expensive food in their houses and were dressed in fashionable European dress. A community of the Maliovantsy paid a large sum of 140 rubles to Jewish merchants for a set of expensive clothes for their community. As Vasili Skvortsov, one of the members of the investigating committee, noted, 'The dissenters threw away their national costumes as peasant emblems of their former slavery and labor; their new dresses served as the symbols of their anticipated new forms of the better social life and of their expected privileged position in the kingdom of their 'Redeemer,' which will be established for them here on Earth rather than in Heaven.'<sup>61</sup>

Ukrainian dissenters rejected both their peasant and Ukrainian identities because they were associated with exploitation and humiliation. Denying the national principle in the construction of their identity, they admitted Jews as 'Christian converts' into their community. By doing so, the dissenters invoked one of the conditions for the Advent of Jesus Christ – the conversion of Jews to Christianity. Some Jewish intellectuals responded to the invitation of the Ukrainian evangelicals and joined their Christian movement.

The Orthodox authors always pointed to 'the Jews who exploited our countryside and our peasants in particular.' These authors argued that Jews incited the Stundist peasants against the Russian Church and the Russian state, and pushed them in the direction of 'communist revolution.'<sup>62</sup> But police documents show a different picture of the relations between Stundist peasants and the New Testament Jews, that of friendship and mutual assistance. Educated Jewish intellectuals tried to help the Russian and Ukrainian peasants in their search for a better life and social justice. Evangelical religion and the revolutionary movement created a common ground between the two groups of outsiders in Russian society: Jews and poor Ukrainian peasants.

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<sup>60</sup> See I. Sikorskii, Op. cit., 52-4 (A description of 1892), and RGIA report of the Kiev General Governor (of 1895).

<sup>61</sup> Vasili Skvortsov, 'Novoshtundism,' *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1892, No. 227.

<sup>62</sup> P. Petrushevskii, 'O shtundizme...', *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev, 1884), vol. 1, 187. See also: I. Strel'bitskii, *Kratkii ocherk shtundizma i svod tekstov, napravlennykh k ego oblicheniyu* (Odessa, 1893), 17, 22, 198; Compare with other publications: 'Kommunisticheskaya propaganda v Rossii,' *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1890, No. 106, 2; 'Sotsialisticheskaya propaganda shtundizma,' *ibid.*, 1890, No. 183, 2; 'Stunda i eya protivogosudarstvennyi kharakter,' *Russkoe slovo*, 1895, No. 107, 1-2.

## ‘Forebears’, ‘saints’ and ‘martyrs’: the politics of commemoration in Bulgaria in the 1880s and 1890s<sup>1</sup>

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The memory of the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement, as in all other national ideologies,<sup>2</sup> was not transmitted only in books.<sup>3</sup> It was embodied in the images of ‘saints’ and ‘martyrs’ commemorated at specific places. This paper will focus on the importance of the cult of forebears and predecessors as a part of popular political culture in Bulgaria in the 1880s and 1890s. During this period it increasingly mattered how ordinary people felt about nationality. The importance of this problem increased because of the introduction of universal male suffrage which followed the Târnovo constitution of 1879.<sup>4</sup> In this regard attention will be paid to days of national commemoration usually organised at the places of execution of Bulgarian national heroes and where Bulgarian rebel detachments had had battles.<sup>5</sup> These days of commemoration were cultural and discursive practices that constituted new identities, new definitions of patriotism and identification with the state.

I will be arguing that the commemoration of dead leaders and great events from the past played a very important role in shaping popular historical memory as part of identity building which cannot be done without stories, signs and symbols.<sup>6</sup> These rituals shaped the ways in which the national revolutionaries were perceived and imagined. They invented a nationalistic public tradition and fostered a form of patriotism specific to itself. In this way historical myths became a part of political mythology and they aided political mobilisation. The commemorations were the obvious sites for this to take place. They were occasions for politics and folklore to be manifested together. Because of this, special attention will be given to the nationalistic and radical *language*, to the operation of national *symbols*, and to the pervasive concern with ritual and *gesture*.

During this period European political life found itself increasingly ritualised and filled with symbols and public appeals. As the previous religious ways of ensuring subordination, obedience and loyalty were eroded, the need for something to replace

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<sup>2</sup> On Bulgarian nationalism see for example M. Todorova, *The Course of Discourses of Bulgarian Nationalism*, in *East European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter F. Sugar. Washington 1995: 55-102.

<sup>3</sup> I am referring here to some very important books that shaped the reception of the national revolutionary past in the decade after 1878 as Z. Stoianov, *Vasil Levski. Diakoniat*. Plovdiv 1883.; *Chetite v Balgaria na Philip Totia, Hadzgy Dimitar i Stefan Karadzga (1867-1868)*, Plovdiv 1885.; *Cherti ot szivota i spisatelskata deiatelnost na Liuben S. Karavelov*. Plovdiv, 1885; *Zapiski po balgarskite vastania. (Razkaz na ochevidec)*. vol. 1. Plovdiv 1884.

<sup>4</sup> For the Târnovo constitution in English language see C. E. Black, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria*. Princeton 1943: 69-133; C. Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia and Balkan Nationalism. Russian Influence in the Internal Affairs of Bulgaria and Serbia, 1879-1886*. Connecticut 1978: 37-8, 102; R. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918., A History*. New York 1983: 27-35.

<sup>5</sup> In the very beginning this analysis was inspired mainly by L Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley 1984 and especially the first part entitled ‘*The Poetics of Power*’

<sup>6</sup> About the role of these commemorations in the political mobilisation see S. Detchev, ‘*Roliata na predcite i predtechite v politicheskata mobilizacia po vreme na balgarskata kriza (1886-1887)*’ in *Predci i predtechi. Mitove i utopii na Balkanite*. Blagoevgrad 1997: 326-37

them was met by what some authors like Eric Hobsbawm have called 'the invention of tradition.'<sup>7</sup> This development was a mixture of planting from above and growth from below. In this regard new national festivals were instituted. However, as this article will demonstrate, Bulgarian radical politicians had no recent historical resources such as crown, military glory, empire or colonial conquest<sup>8</sup> and for that reason, despite the imitation and appropriation of other nationalistic traditions, they turned to the different legitimising resources at their disposal.

A day of national commemoration is one of those occasions when nationalist or patriotic discourse provides its own revealing glimpse into modern Bulgarian national mythology. Ritual occasions like Hadzgi Dimităr's day, Hristo Botev's day and others gave an opportunity for Bulgarian rebels against Ottoman domination from the past were presented as 'saints' and 'martyrs' and these very words were used by contemporaries in order to depict them.

Initially these days of national commemoration originated in a fragile civil society and as an initiative of the political circles around the Popular Liberal Party. Among other factors, in 1879 the Liberals won the first parliamentary elections for the National Assembly in the Bulgarian principality by appropriating during the pre-election campaign the symbolic capital of the late Liuben Karavelov a former émigré, radical journalist and politician during the national movement against Ottoman domination.<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of 1882, during the struggle against the *pālnomoshtia regime* (which had been established by the monarch Alexander I and the Conservatives when they suspended the constitution in 1881), in order to re-enforce their political message, the liberals organised in Rousse worship at the graves of Karavelov and another national revolutionary activist Angel Kāntchev.<sup>10</sup> At the start of 1885 even the Conservatives in the Bulgarian principality were forced to make an attempt to discredit the Liberals by appropriating the moral authority of the late revolutionary leader Vasil Levski as well as the revolutionary leader, journalist and poet Hristo Botev. They made this in obvious opposition to the prestige of Karavelov.<sup>11</sup> In the spring of 1885 bones of Georgi S. Rakovski (a national ideologist and revolutionary leader under Ottoman domination) were carried from Romania to Bulgaria, initiated by the Volunteer's association in Rousse.<sup>12</sup> This was used by the Liberals and their leader, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Petko Karavelov (Liuben Karavelov's brother) as a political demonstration to increase their prestige among the public. It is not surprising that as a result of this action their political adversaries were furious. They immediately blamed the Liberals for the attempt to appropriate Rakovski's heritage and represent themselves as his unique political followers.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, these commemorations were a part of the struggle for national unification after the Congress of Berlin in 1878.<sup>14</sup> On the eve of the Unification of Eastern

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<sup>7</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*. New York 1987: 105.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> G. Todorov, 'Bālgarskata sledosvobozhdenska publicistica i istoriografia za zhivota i deinostta na Liuben Karavelov (1879 - 1885)', in *V pamet na academic Mihail Dimitrov*. Sofia 1974: 401.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.: 403.

<sup>11</sup> *Otechestvo*, 23 May 1885, No 26.; *Tārnovska konstitucia*, 13 Feb. 1885, No. 112.

<sup>12</sup> Z. Stoianov, *Sāchinenia*, vol. 3. Sofia 1983: 432.

<sup>13</sup> *Srede*, 12 June 1885 No. 132

<sup>14</sup> I. Stoianovitch, *Iz minaloto*. Sofia 1992: 37-8.; E. Stelova, A. Pantev, *Sāedinenieto na Kniazhestvo Bālgaria i Iztochna Rumelia*. Sofia 1985: 68-9.; I. Dimitrov, *Predi 100 godini Sāedinenieto*. Sofia 1985: 123.

Rumelia<sup>15</sup> and the Bulgarian Principality (6 September 1885)<sup>16</sup> these commemorations were very important in mobilising the Bulgarian public especially in Eastern Rumelia in order to support the Unification movement. On 17 May 1884, through the initiative of the pupils from the local secondary school in Plovdiv, the first commemoration of Hristo Botev was organised. On 19 May 1885 Botev was commemorated again in the towns of Plovdiv, Chirpan, Iambol and Sliven.<sup>17</sup>

Following on from the first attempts of 1884,<sup>18</sup> on 20 and 21 July 1885, through the initiative of the Volunteer's association of Kazanlāk, a day of national commemoration was organised for Hadzgi Dimităr at Buzludzga in the Balkan mountains. There were guests from Eastern Rumelia and the Bulgarian principality. Priests held a memorial service at the grave of the hero after which speeches and recitals of poems devoted to Hadzgi Dimităr's death began. This was followed by eating and drinking as well as popular dances (*hora*). Shouts of 'Down with Rumelia!', 'Long live the Unification!' and 'Long live complete (celokupna) Bulgaria!' accompanied the holiday.<sup>19</sup>

Organised by political figures with radical and populist leanings, all these commemorations were overwhelmed by rhetoric against 'notables' (*chorbadzgi*), 'monks' and 'kings'.<sup>20</sup> In this regard they marked the competition for power between the Liberal and Conservative parts of the Bulgarian political class.

Days of national commemoration were also organised during the 'Bulgarian crisis' (1886-87). This was a unique period when as a result of Bulgarian Unification on 6 September 1885 and the coup d'état on 9 August 1886 (when pro-Russian Bulgarian officers kidnapped the Bulgarian monarch), the country entered political crisis and for a period of almost ten years Bulgarian-Russian relations broke down (1886-1896). These events had their shattering impact on Bulgarian society and its political culture because they brought very crucial political and cultural matters into debate. 'The Bulgarian crisis' (1886-1887) challenged many assumptions about the role of Russia in Bulgarian history and politics. During the crisis and in the following years, the politically active part of the population and the whole of the Bulgarian intelligentsia were irreconcilably divided on the issue of 'Russia' and the 'Russian menace' and thus it became central for Bulgarian political life.<sup>21</sup>

On 20 April 1886 a commemoration ceremony took place in the small town of Panagiurishte and at 'Oborishte' where the so-called Bulgarian National Assembly of 1876 made the decision to proclaim the uprising against Ottoman power.<sup>22</sup> On 18 May 1886 pupils from a local secondary school in Plovdiv organised a commemoration to

<sup>15</sup> For a general overview on Eastern Rumelia in the English language see R. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878–1918*, : 85-97.; B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. vol. 1, 1983: 366-70; C. Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia* :7-8, 14, 93, 208-13, 224; D. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov and the Emergence of Modern Bulgaria 1870-1895*, Durham and London 1993: 70-6.

<sup>16</sup> About the union between Eastern Rumelia and Bulgarian principality in English language see B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, vol. 1: 370-1; C. Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia*: 214-36.; R. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*: 97-103; D. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov*: 74-81.

<sup>17</sup> E. Stelova, A. Pantev, *Sădinenieto*: 60-1.

<sup>18</sup> Z. Stoianov, *Săchinenia*, vol. 3. Sofia 1983: 391, 426-9.

<sup>19</sup> I. Stoianovitch, *Iz minaloto*: 37-8; E. Stelova, A. Pantev, *Sădinenieto*:. 68-9.; I. Dimitrov, *Predi 100 godini*: 123.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Stoianov, *Săchinenia*, vol. 3. Sofia 1983: 395, 425, 430.

<sup>21</sup> For more see. S. Radev, *Stroiteli na săvremenna Bulgaria* vol. 1. Sofia 1973:739-803; vol. 2 Sofia 1973. R. Popov, *Bălgaria na krăstopăt. Regentstvoto 1886 - 1887*. Sofia 1991. In the English language see C. Jelavich, *Tsarist Russia* , B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, vol. 1, 1983: 237–74, 371-2; R. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*: 105-24; D. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov*: 84-123.

<sup>22</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 3 may 1886 No. 15; 7 May 1886, No. 16.



Hristo Botev as in the previous two years.<sup>23</sup> At the same time a commemoration was organised by a special commission headed by the mayor of Vratsa at 'Milin kamāk', where in 1876 a detachment commanded by Botev had had one of its battles with Ottoman troops.<sup>24</sup> There were also several commemorations for Botev in 1887.<sup>25</sup>

There was a commemoration of Hadzgi Dimităr again on 20 July 1886.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, on 13 July near the village of Vishovgrad, where eighteen years previously a rebel detachment had fought a battle with Ottoman troops, Bulgarian revolutionaries were commemorated. One of the revolutionary leaders, Stefan Karadzga, was commemorated and in one of the main speeches the Bulgarian monarch, Alexander I, was represented as the embodiment of 'Karadzga's spirit'.<sup>27</sup> The same kind of commemoration at 'Kanlădere', where in 1868 Bulgarian rebel detachments led by Hadzgi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzga had fought with Ottoman troops, took place in July 1886<sup>28</sup> and 1887.<sup>29</sup>

These commemorations established a new patriotic political repertoire. They mapped many sacred geographical places like Buzludzga, Oborishte, Batak, Perushtica, Drianovski manastir, Shipka, Milin kamāk, Kozlodui. In the mass consciousness these sacred places became part of a modern Bulgarian national and political mythology. Therefore, these places began to have extraordinary emotional and symbolic significance and great emotional power and passion. Contemporaries were aware of this function in 1885, writing about 'the historic role' that Buzludzga was to play in the future, Z.Stoyanov stated explicitly that 'it will be contemporary with the Mount of Saint Athos'.<sup>30</sup>

The names of national heroes including Hadzgi Dimităr, Stefan Karadzga, Liuben Karavelov, Georgi Rakovski, Hristo Botev also became sacred. In the 1880s the phraseology of forebears and predecessors was given and presented as 'saints' and 'martyrs' and became a regular, required part of nationalist discourse. The constant reminders of 'our popular martyrs' of 1868, 1875 and 1876 was an important part of the political discourse of radical nationalist circles within the Popular Liberal party.<sup>31</sup> This was especially salient in the proclamations written by the initiative committees of the associations known as 'Bulgaria for itself' ('*Bălgaria za sebe si*') that began to appear to oppose the political pressure coming from St Petersburg in many Bulgarian towns and villages in February and March 1887.<sup>32</sup> Mention of these 'martyrs' in all of the proclamations was as a ritualistic gesture.<sup>33</sup> Political documents tried to suggest to the contemporary public that 'the shadows of these patriots' and 'martyrs' '... are flying above us and they are looking at how we will behave in these critical times'.<sup>34</sup> This language of 'our martyrs' was a revival of the Bulgarian emigrant discourse in Romania from the beginning of the 1870s, when with the contribution of Botev,

<sup>23</sup> Z. Stoianov, *Săchinenia*, vol. 3. Sofia, 1983., s. 459.

<sup>24</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 14 May, No. 18; 28 May 1886, No. 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Nezavisima Bălgaria*, 23 May 1887, No. 98.; *Svoboda*, 20 May 1887. No. 57.; *Bălgarsko*, 16 June 1888. No. 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> *Svetlina*, 26 July, No. 191, *Rositca*, 30 July, No. 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 30 July 1886, No. 37.

<sup>28</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 23 July 1886, No. 35.

<sup>29</sup> P. Frangov, *Tărszgestvoto pri Krăvnata reka*. Veliko Tarnovo 1887.

<sup>30</sup> Z. Stoianov, *Săchinenia*, vol. 3. Sofia 1983: 395.

<sup>31</sup> Z. Stojanov, *Ne mu beshe vremeto*. Rousse 1886: 9.

<sup>32</sup> For more see V. Tankova, 'Problemi na organizacionното ustrojstvo i razvitie na Narodnoliberalnata partia (1886-1894)', *Vekove* 1988 5: 24-7.

<sup>33</sup> See for example *Nezavisima Bălgaria*, 28 Feb. 1887, No. 66, 5 March 1887, No. 68, 24 March 1887, No. 76.; 28 March, No. 78; 31 March, No 79 and many others.

<sup>34</sup> *Nezavisima Bălgaria*, 31 March 1887, No. 79.

Levski and Hadzgi Dimităr as ‘martyrs’ of the Bulgarian national cause were depicted and imagined.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, on the eve of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877, the Bulgarian Central Charity Society (BCBO) issued a proclamation to Bulgarians to join the coming Russian army in the name of the ‘blood of our martyrs.’<sup>36</sup> When in 1885 the Conservative politician from Eastern Rumelia, Danail Jurukov, was invited by Zahari Stoianov to attend the commemoration of Hadzgi Dimităr at Buzludzga he replied that there was no reason to worship ‘different saints.’ Stoianov answered that he would not like to worship ‘Russian ones’ because ‘we should have our own’.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, having in mind the carrying of Rakovski’s bones, at that time Conservative and Pro-Russian politician and journalist Ikonov, wrote in his memoirs: ‘Church and citizenry made a bow to his coffin and honour these remains much more than they deserved. All of us wondered about the jealousy of some Bulgarians toward this hero and patriot and everybody praised this jealousy.’<sup>38</sup>

In 1886-87 through the speeches and the orchestrated atmosphere at these commemorations, radical circles within the Liberal party tried to put forward many notions and ideas with current political salience. They tried to appropriate the symbolic capital of Bulgarian ‘martyrs’ against Ottoman power in order to legitimise and intensify the struggle against Russian pressure and interference in Bulgarian internal affairs. Yet at the beginning of 1886. Stoianov underlined: ‘As a people we can be proud that all our popular workers and patriots: Rakovski, Karavelov, Levski, Botev, Kănchev, Volov, Benkovski have been against official Russia. They have never appealed to her because they have known that (the) Russian whip is more painful than the Turkish one.’<sup>39</sup> In the following months the press that supported the resistance of the Bulgarian regency led by Stambolov against Russian policy argued that

if there had not lived on the Balkan Peninsula Bulgarians, if there had not been crazy heads Hadzgi Dimitărs, Levskis, and other naughty elements, then Russia should not have had a taste of here.<sup>40</sup>

In the speeches at these commemorations the orators emphasised the heroic deeds of the Bulgarian insurgents against Ottoman rule in explicit or implicit opposition to the Russian military action of 1877-78.<sup>41</sup> Many of them explicitly placed a symbolic link between the policy of the Bulgarian government against current Russian pressure and the Bulgarian ‘martyrs’ of the 1860s and 1870s. Their ‘shadows’ were depicted as looking like the contemporaries whether they would be able to preserve ‘liberty, which was accomplished through their valuable blood.’<sup>42</sup> The radical journalist D Petkov emphasised how ‘the liberty for which Botev sacrificed his life is being raped for a year by a strong tyrant.’<sup>43</sup> – an unequivocal allusion to the Russian tsar

<sup>35</sup> About Botev’s own contribution to this mythology of ‘saints’ and ‘martyrs’ in the first half of 1870s see for example Z. Stoyanov, *Hristo Botjov. Opit za biografija*. Sofia 1976: 242.

<sup>36</sup> *Osvobozhdenie Bolgarii ot tureckogo iga*. vol. 1., Moskva 1961: 643-4.

<sup>37</sup> Jurukov, D. *Spomeni iz politicheskia szivot na Bălgaria*. Sofia 1932: s. 114.

<sup>38</sup> Ikonov, T. *Memoari*. Sofia 1973: 399.

<sup>39</sup> See the introduction written by Z. Stojanov in G. S. Rakovski, *Preselenie v Rusia ili ruskata ubijstvenna politika za bălgarite*. Sofia 1886: 8.

<sup>40</sup> Z. Stojanov, *Kakvo napravihme v Tărnovo?* Rousse 1886: 6. See also *Svoboda*, 20 May 1887., No. 57

<sup>41</sup> *Svetlina*, 26 July 1886, No. 191.; P. Frangov, *Tărszgestvoto*.: 28.

<sup>42</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 30 July, No. 37.

<sup>43</sup> *Nezavisima Bălgaria*, 23 May 1887, No. 98.

Alexander III. In another speech at Botev's commemoration Stoianov used an anti-Russian argument about how 'while we have such celebrities as Liuben Karavelov, Botev, Levski and others, the Bulgarian people, its liberty and autonomy will never die.'<sup>44</sup> The following year it was stated even more explicitly against Russian policy and the Bulgarian Russophiles how 'Rakovski, Levski, Hadzgi Dimităr, Karadzga, Karavelov and others did not die for 'the glory of the Russian tsar'.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore in these commemorations the liberal, or more properly, radical, elite commemorated events connected with the Bulgarian revolutionary past and struggles against the Ottoman Empire. These national days of commemoration usually turned into political meetings and festivals. They were cultural practices that in crucial moments served political purposes. They served the liberals against the conservatives by using rhetoric such as 'ordinary people', 'poor' and 'little' against 'educated', 'wealthy' and 'notables.'<sup>46</sup> This also served the Unification movement in 1885 and the government and radical nationalist circles during the political crisis in 1886-87. In the following years it served the government led by Stambolov against Russia and the Pro-Russian part of the Bulgarian political class. That is the reason why an overwhelming rhetoric connected with 'patria', 'people', 'nation', 'independence' and 'freedom' was counterposed to what was 'alien' and 'foreigner.'<sup>47</sup>

The Bulgarian liberal and radical elite of nationalists created their own kind of ceremonies. The names of national heroes and hallowed historical places became key words in a public space that served political purposes and for the making of the nation and modern patriotism. These cultural practices popularised the romantic language of national glory that became increasingly invested with emotional significance. Although it was enunciated with religious fervour, it was nonetheless resolutely secular in content.

The message within these commemorations was of a new political energy of radical nationalism. It was a version that was ready to legitimise extreme activities and to imagine a complete rupture with St. Petersburg in the name of Bulgarian 'autonomy', 'liberty' and 'independence.'<sup>48</sup> The commemorations and the symbolic energy of the 'martyrs' gave some advantages for the liberal and radical political elite over the conservatives, the anti-Russian camp over pro-Russians. In this way radical nationalism was defined as a genuine one.

Moreover, these important dates from the past were put within the interpretative framework that included 6 September 1885 (the day of the Unification)<sup>49</sup> and 7 November 1885 (the day of the victory by Bulgarian troops at Slivnitsa during the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885). It was explicitly mentioned in a speech made at Panagiurishte by the teacher At. Hr. Simov who emphasised that the '20 April created in our country the 11 August 1877,<sup>50</sup> 20 April organised the 6 September 1885 and this very day marked 7 November 1885.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 21 May 1886. No. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Svoboda*, 20 May 1887. No. 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 21 May 1886., No. 20.

<sup>47</sup> *Samozashchita*, 28 Sept. 1885, No. 1.; *Tărnovska konstitucia*, 29 March 1886, Nos.18-21, 25-29, 32 etc.; Z. Stoianov, *Ne mu beshe vremeto*. Rousse 1886: 3-4, 39, 46.; *Nezavisimost*, I, 5 April 1886 No. 9.; 9 April 1886 No. 10; 14 May 1886, No. 18; 18 July 1886, No. 27; *Plovdiv*, I, 20 May 1886, No. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 7 May, No. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Sofia, CDA (Centralen Dyrzhaven Arkhiv), f. 1599, a.u. 1667: 1.

<sup>50</sup> The day when Bulgarian volunteers had a battle with Ottoman troops at Shipka during the Russo-Turkish war 1877-78.

<sup>51</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 7 May, No. 16.

The organisation of these commemorations was an attempt to challenge and substitute the system of commemorations and holidays that had been established since 1879. During this period, apart from the Bulgarian monarch's birthday; the day of his ascension to the throne and the day of St Cyril and St Methodius, there were also commemorations for the Russian tsar's birthday and his name-day together with the whole Russian royal family; a day of the proclamation of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78; the crossing of the river Danube by Russian troops in 1877; the important battles and entrances of Russian troops in different towns during the war; prominent events of Russian history; anniversaries of Russian writers, diplomats and military officers.<sup>52</sup>

The radical-democratic view of recent national history had acute practical importance. It was part of the political strategy, struggle and programme and it contained a political appeal to the masses. But we have to keep in mind that these commemorations also suggested loyalty to the Prince<sup>53</sup> and Nation. Following the Rousseauan heritage, Bulgarian 'patriotism' was a civic religion required by the state and all these ceremonies were an attempt to convert the citizens to the new religion. In this regard the Bulgarian case reaffirmed what many authors who have studied ethnicity and nationalism have already stressed about the similarities between nationalism and religion.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, they have shown nationalism as a secular religion, 'political religion' or 'civic religion.'<sup>55</sup> Emile Durkheim has emphasised the role of collective rites and ceremonies in the reaffirmation of all societies. He also stressed the role of commemorations, great events in national life and how, during the French Revolution, things that were purely lay in character were transformed into sacred things, writing: 'these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason. A religion tended to become established which had its dogmas, symbols, altars and feasts.'<sup>56</sup>

Insofar as these celebrations were a politicising experience, political mobilisation connected with internal Bulgarian political divisions. It drew group boundaries that might include some and exclude others and it resulted in the suppression of difference and the inclusion of common and 'poor' people against 'rich' and conservative who were excluded. In such a way the commemorations with their symbols and rituals were strategies for the extension of power. They became an important medium for working out political attitudes and they had extremely significant consequences. They inspired citizens' loyalty to and their identification with the state and ruling elite. They increased the degree of sacrifice that had to be imposed on civilians. These events shaped historical and political perceptions of the masses at that time and they were used to create a new national consensus that gave certain advantages to the liberal and radical part of the elite. The public character of the ritual authorised a

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<sup>52</sup> See for example *Bălgaro-russkij kalendar za 1879*. Sofia 1879.; *Kalendar za 1881. Izdava redakcijata na "Bălgarski glas"*. Sofia 1881; *Kalendar za 1881 godina. Izdanie na Slavjanskoto blagotvoritelno druzhestvo v Sofia*, Sofia 1881.

<sup>53</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 30 July 1886, No. 37.

<sup>54</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition. London 1991: 5, 11-2; See also C. Cr. O'Brien, *God-Land: Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge MA 1988; J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*, London 1987; Ad. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge 1997, chap. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Among many examples see D. Apter, 'Political religion in the new nations.', in Geertz, Cl. *Old Societies and New States*, New York 1963.; M. Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993; G. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Civilization*, Hanover and London 1994.

<sup>56</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. J. Swain, London 1915: 214.

direct relation between the commemorated forebears, ancestors and ‘martyrs’ on the one hand, and all those who organised or attended the event, on the other.

In the following years, Stefan Stambolov’s government (1887-1894)<sup>57</sup> and circles close to it, carried on organising these kinds of commemorations. In May 1888 there was a commemoration of Botev in Sofia. In the morning there was memorial service in ‘Sveti Kral’ church followed by a march with a band to Vasil Levski’s grave where speeches were given.<sup>58</sup> There was a march to the royal palace in order to congratulate the monarch on his day and a breakfast was organised outside the city.<sup>59</sup>

In 1888 there was a celebration of Botev’s detachment at the village of Kozlodui on the river Danube. Participants included pupils, teachers, citizens, officials, peasants, Botev’s brothers-in-arms and other former participants in the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. Many delegations from different towns especially from the northern part of Bulgaria were present as well. Clergy carried church banners. There were military officers also. The pupils were carrying posters with selected couplets from Botev’s poems written on them. There was Botev’s portrait, military and civil music bands. The bank of the Danube was decorated with banners and arches. There was gunfire. A funeral march was played by the band. The procession was led by the clergy, followed by the portrait of the hero, and several delegations from different places with their garlands. There was an ecclesiastical memorial service. Some speeches were made by officials, teachers and journalists. Participants were carrying several garlands. After this ceremony, a lunch started. In the afternoon, people had fun with music bands, shepherd’s pipes, (*kaval*), bagpipes (*gaidi*) and violins. There were popular dances (*hora*).<sup>60</sup> Between 17-19 May there was a holiday for the population from the region of Vratsa.<sup>61</sup> A traditional commemoration was also organised in Plovdiv.<sup>62</sup>

In May 1888 at Milin kamāk there was an ecclesiastical memorial service. Speeches were delivered to glorify the heroes and their commander. Pupils recited Botev’s poems. Those who took part were peasants from the region, teachers, pupils and women from the town of Vratsa, Botev’s comrades, the mayor of the town.<sup>63</sup> Some complained however, that up to that time at Milin kamāk as well on the bank near Kozlodui there had only been wooden crosses as public monuments.<sup>64</sup>

On the eve of 18 May 1889 Vratsa was decorated with national flags. Administrative buildings, schools and private houses were decorated with garlands. An ecclesiastical liturgy was held. The national anthem at the time ‘Shumi Maritza’ and the song ‘Tih bial Dunav’, that was devoted to the memory of Botev, were played. Since the day of the hero and the day of the monarch coincided, the pupils came with the portrait of the new Bulgarian monarch Prince Ferdinand decorated with tricolors and garlands. There were many officials with their spouses, the clergy from the Vratsa region, citizens and peasants who had come with Botev’s portrait dressed with garlands, tricolors and insurrectionary banners. The band played the song ‘Tih bial Dunav’ in honour of Botev. A teacher made a speech about the importance of Prince Ferdinand’s day. A choir sang for the Prince. The band played ‘Shumi Maritza.’ The pupils recited

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<sup>57</sup> D. Perry, *Stefan Stambolov*, pp. 124-211; R. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*: 125-160.; B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*: 372.

<sup>58</sup> For Vasil Levski and his role in Bulgarian popular memory see N. Gentchev, *Vasil Levski*. Sofia 1987.

<sup>59</sup> *Svoboda*, 21 May 1888, No. 157.

<sup>60</sup> *Svoboda*, 26 May 1888, No 159; *Bălgarsko*, 16 June 1888. No. 17-18.

<sup>61</sup> *Svoboda*, 26 May 1888, No 159.

<sup>62</sup> *Plovdiv*, 26 May 1888, No. 159.

<sup>63</sup> *Svoboda*, 26 May 1888, No 159.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*.

Botev's poems. A stone was put at the place of the future monument to Botev. The chorus sang Botev's song 'My Prayer.' There was a procession to the city council. A telegram was sent to the Prince with congratulations. The breakfast was organised in the city garden where music played. People had fun and played dances (*hora*).<sup>65</sup>

On 17 May 1889 again there was a commemoration of Botev's detachment at the village of Kozlodui. The commemoration was organised by the citizens and officials in the town of Oriahovo. Delegations from all local villages were also present. The event followed the whole ritual and ceremony that had been already established.<sup>66</sup> This tradition was carried on in the next year also on 17 May.<sup>67</sup>

On 27 May 1890 there was a bigger commemoration in Vratsa when Botev's monument was formally opened. The celebration was even postponed from 21 to 27 May in order to allow Prince Ferdinand to visit it together with the Prime Minister, Stambolov. Botev's mother, spouse and daughter also took part in the event. Many towns and communities in the Bulgarian principality sent their garlands.<sup>68</sup> Botev's 14-year-old daughter, Ivanka Boteva made a speech suggesting loyalty to the contested Petersburg Bulgarian monarch.<sup>69</sup> The commemoration was covered by all newspapers in the country.

During this period the commemorations of Hadzgi Dimitar, Stefan Karadzga and their rebel detachment were no less important. In July 1888 a commemoration was organised by the Shipka patriotic association 'Bulgaria for itself.'<sup>70</sup> In 1889, near the town Sevlievo, at Kanlădere, a commemoration was organised by the volunteer's association 'Lev' ('Lion'). In the town a band played at the central square in front of the monument. Boys wore the uniforms of Bulgarian rebels. They carried the banner and marched through the town. The stone was placed where the monument was to be built. At night, fires illuminated the place. There was music and popular songs. Pupils recited poems in the evening. Participants included people from different towns and villages in the region. The next morning there was a memorial service and a garland was placed at the stone. Speeches were given and popular dances (*hora*) took place, at noon they returned to Sevlievo.<sup>71</sup> On 8 July 1890, during the next commemoration, which was preceded by much more publicity in the newspapers, the monument was opened and sanctified by the priests from the nearby villages.<sup>72</sup>

A tradition of commemorations at Buzludzga was carried on during this period. In 1889 the commemoration was organised on 20 July as St. Elijah's day instead of 18 July. However, since the political environment was cooler there were about 300-400 people present. The decision was taken for the commemoration to take place every year on 20 July. The participants also decided to send a request to the National Assembly to provide money for building a monument to the heroes.<sup>73</sup> At the commemoration on 20 July 1890 it was decided that a monument should be built.<sup>74</sup>

There were many similar events during this period. Some of the commemorations were devoted to the uprising of 1876 in Thracia. In 1889 and especially in 1890 those

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<sup>65</sup> *Svoboda*, 31 May 1889, No. 271.; *Napred*, 16 July 1889, No. 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Svoboda*, 14 June 1889, No. 275.

<sup>67</sup> *Svoboda*, 9 May 1890, No. 361.

<sup>68</sup> *Lichnijat arhiv na Stefan Stambolov*, vol. I, Sofia, 1994, s. 54.; *Svoboda*, 9 May 1890, No. 361; 3 June 1890, No. 367; *Nova Bălgaria*, 16 June 1890, No. 3.; *Narodna misăl*, 7 June 1890, No. 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Svoboda*, 6 June 1890, No. 368.; *Nova Bălgaria*, 9 June 1890, No. 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Narodni prava*, 27 July 1888, No. 52.

<sup>71</sup> *Svoboda*, 22 July 1889, No. 286; *Napred*, 16 July 1889, No. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Narodni prava*, 21 July 1890, No. 183.

<sup>73</sup> *Svoboda*, 1 August 1889, No. 289.

<sup>74</sup> *Svoboda*, 28 July 1890, No. 381.

commemorations were very intense. They were organised on 20 April 1889<sup>75</sup> and 1890 in Panagiurishte and at Oborishte.<sup>76</sup> Similar commemorations took place also in Koprivshtica on 20 April 1890.<sup>77</sup> On 27 April 1889 local teachers organised a commemoration in the village Perushtica. An arch was built and mourning flags were put up. One of the teachers told a story about the uprising in 1876.<sup>78</sup> In the next year this commemoration in Perushtica was repeated followed by a ceremony in the village of Batak on 4 May 1890. The Bulgarian monarch was present at the commemoration in Perushtica.<sup>79</sup> The relatives of the dead heroes took part in many of these commemorations too.<sup>80</sup> There were also former participants from the Bulgarian rebel detachments who were still alive. By and large, in 1890 those commemorations were much more intense because they formed part of the campaign for the elections of the sixth National Assembly. In the following years these kinds of commemorations were also organised at Kozlodui,<sup>81</sup> Buzludzga,<sup>82</sup> Panagiurishte<sup>83</sup> and other places.

In the next part of the paper I will add something more to the logic of all these events as expressed symbolically in language, images and gestures.

These commemorations served as legitimising underpinnings of Stambolov's government, its internal and foreign policy, as well as of the political class who ruled Bulgaria in the late 1880s and early 1890s. For example, in the speeches by a local teacher and educational inspector at Oborishte in 1890, the Prime Minister, Stambolov, was depicted as 'the first worker' at the time of the uprising in 1876.<sup>84</sup> Yet in September 1887 the newspaper *Vardar* wrote that only two of the fighters from the national movement against Ottoman rule were still alive – Stambolov and Stoianov.<sup>85</sup> In June 1890 *Nova Bălgaria* emphasised that it was Stambolov who carried on publishing in the Romanian town of Georgevo, Botev's newspaper of the same name after the poet's death in 1876.<sup>86</sup> In many other cases this symbolic link between the Prime Minister and governmental circles, on the one hand, and the national revolutionary movement against Ottoman power from the past, on the other, was underlined.<sup>87</sup> Until the end of the regime the close friendship between Stambolov and Botev was used to legitimise Stambolov and as a justification for his policies.<sup>88</sup>

Part of the message was sought to legitimise explicitly the anti-Russian policy of the Bulgarian government. In 1888 at the commemoration in Plovdiv, in a speech made by Nikola Spepij, Botev was juxtaposed to 'the Russians who are trying to enslave Bulgaria.'<sup>89</sup> In the discourse of the governmental newspapers the above-mentioned opposition between the heroes of the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement and

<sup>75</sup> *Napred*, 16 July 1889, No. 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Svoboda*, 25 April 1890, No. 357.; *Plovdiv*, 29 April 1890, No. 31.

<sup>77</sup> *Svoboda*, 26 May 1890, No. 365.

<sup>78</sup> *Svoboda*, 10 May 1889, No. 265.

<sup>79</sup> *Plovdiv*, 6 May 1890, No. 33.

<sup>80</sup> I. Stoianovitch, *Iz minaloto.*, p. 38.; D. Marinov, *Stefan Stambolov i noveishata ni istoria*. Sofia 1993: 64.; C. Petrov, 'Buzludganskite tărzhества i tiahnata rolia v revoliucionnata ni istoria.', *Istoricheski pregled*, 1971, 3: 59.

<sup>81</sup> *Svoboda*, 4 June 1892, No. 826.

<sup>82</sup> *Malāk vestnik*, 11 July 1892, No. 28.

<sup>83</sup> *Svoboda*, 29 April 1894, No. 1376.

<sup>84</sup> *Svoboda*, 25 April 1890, No. 357.

<sup>85</sup> *Vardar*, 22 Sept. 1887, No. 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Nova Bălgaria*, 9 June 1890, No. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Narodna misāl*, 7 June 1890, No. 10.

<sup>88</sup> *Svoboda*, 15 March 1894, No. 1342.

<sup>89</sup> *Plovdiv*, 26 May 1888, No. 19.

Russia took a prominent place.<sup>90</sup> In a debate with a Russophile newspaper *Macedonia* regarding Russian help for the Bulgarian *Liberation*, the newspaper *Plovdiv* wrote:

Then, why have so many Bulgarian heroes shed their blood? Why have so many Bulgarian daughters passed through great disgrace? Why have so many Bulgarian mothers had to wear black clothes? In the end, you, Bulgarian foes with Bulgarian names, why were Batak, Perushtica and Panaguirishte wrecked in streams of blood?<sup>91</sup>

Even at the end of the Stambolov's rule the official newspaper *Svoboda* continued to use rhetoric reflecting how Rakovski, Karavelov, Levski and Botev – 'as much as they wanted to see their fatherland free, so much they avoided and were afraid of Russian deliverance'.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the Bulgarian government and its political followers took the symbolic role of the fighters against Ottoman rule whilst the Russian Empire took the symbolic place of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>93</sup>

As I have already mentioned, although still in 1886-87 the Bulgarian monarch Alexander I was sometimes depicted as an embodiment of the martyrs' spirit,<sup>94</sup> in the next years with the new Bulgarian monarch, Prince Ferdinand, this symbolic link was intensified. It was not by accident that Botev's commemorations were organised so that the day of the hero and the day of the monarch would coincide. The portrait of the new Bulgarian monarch was a part of the commemoration and he was personally congratulated on his day and Botev's day as well. The importance of his day was emphasised together with the commemoration of the poet.<sup>95</sup> Ironically, the poet was a writer whose poetry and journalism were generally directed against the monarchy. Notwithstanding, Prince Ferdinand was even personally present at some of the commemorations and played an important role in them.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, despite the continuing rhetoric about 'liberty', 'autonomy', 'independence', 'the new, young and honorable' and against what was described as 'old, rotten and backward',<sup>97</sup> there was also much more emphasis on the 'Prince.' Explicitly or implicitly, the energy of this rhetoric was more pro-Monarchical and anti-Russian.

These cultural practices show the proper place of symbols and images in political life as a part of the new cultural framework. They included constant repetition of the above-mentioned key words and principles, shared attitudes and the use of the same symbols. This symbolic repertoire was very important. The use of symbols including clothing, flags, banners of identification, images engraved with words, colours, objects, simple slogans, really reinforced the political messages. In such a way these rituals became an instrument for the fashioning of the people. Using different symbolic practices such as the use of certain rhetoric, the spread of certain symbols and rituals gave to the political elite and its followers a sense of unity and purpose. People were socialised into a sense of national awareness.

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<sup>90</sup> *Dobrudzga*, 28 Nov. 1887, No. 6.; *Vardar*, 25 Sept. 1887., No. 2.; *Svoboda*, 20 Oct. 1888, No. 212; Z/ Stoianov, *Hristo Botjov. Opit za biografia*. Sofia, 1976; *Svobodno slovo*, 24 юни 1890.

<sup>91</sup> *Plovdiv*, 23 Dec. 1889, No. 50.

<sup>92</sup> *Svoboda*, 12 May 1894, No. 1386.

<sup>93</sup> *Malāk vestnik*, 11 July 1892, No. 28.; *Svoboda*, 29 April 1894, No. 1376.

<sup>94</sup> *Nezavisimost*, 30 July 1886, No. 37.

<sup>95</sup> *Svoboda*, 21 May 1888, No. 157; 31 May 1889, No. 271.

<sup>96</sup> *Svoboda*, 9 May 1890, No. 361; 3 June 1890, No. 367; *Nova Bălgaria*, 16 June 1890, No. 3.; *Narodna misāl*, 7 June 1890, No. 10.; *Plovdiv*, 6 May 1890, No. 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Nova Bălgaria*, 9 June 1890, No. 2.; *Narodna misāl*, 7 June 1890, No. 10.



These symbols, rituals, common collective practices and periodic festivals brought scattered groups together and they gave a reality to an otherwise imaginary community. Participants in these rituals were usually teachers and pupils from secondary schools and also intellectuals and members of the urban educated classes including officials, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, army officers, clerks, secretaries, booksellers, printers, photographers, doctors, clergymen, artisans, shopkeepers, merchants, but also peasants. For those people the political symbols and rituals used during the ceremonies were reminders of duty and public obligations. By mythologising they glorified the new, more understandable version of patriotism and set a moral example for the population.

The experience of the people during the commemorations was mediated and informed by different discursive practices. Of course, the content of the rituals is an unreliable guide to what the common people actually thought, however, it could be a guide to what they were moulded into thinking. We know too little about what went on in the minds of most relatively inarticulate men and women, their thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, we can say that the investment of these symbolic actions with political significance gave a greater impact among the population to certain politics, individuals, political groups and organisations.

But what was really very important in these political rituals and practices was the masses that took part.<sup>98</sup> This public was not very active politically, most of it was illiterate and without the habit of reading books, newspapers and pamphlets.<sup>99</sup> It was outside of public political debates that were going on in clubs, pubs and newspapers. But by being involved in these national days of commemoration this mass public took part in a specific socialising process of identity and nation-building. Insofar as part of the political behaviour occurred within highly charged symbolic actions and collective rituals of community, the investment of these valued collective rituals with a specific and a new nationalistic political content was symptomatic of the process of nation-building in certain rural areas. By being based on the popular memory of rebel detachments confined to the region, this process sometimes reached villages far removed from the political mainstream. Therefore this public received new values that went beyond the frameworks of the local region and were part of a new political culture created by the elite. In this regard, the goal was also to define the nation based on common history through the rituals that fashioned public memory. In such a way these cultural practices, that were part of the politics of identity, created in the participants the sense of having a group identity. They were engaged in collective action that created allegiance and uniformity out of diversity.

However it must not be assumed that these practices affected all groups of the population in the same way. There were also differences in the reception of these political and cultural practices according to region and social status. The elite whose horizon was less localised than that of the peasant was more influenced. For the rural population very often the revolutionary struggle against Ottoman rule meant little if anything. This was the reason why local rituals were imbued with national meaning. This way through these ritual practices the identification with Bulgaria and modern Bulgarian nationalism was internalised.

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<sup>98</sup> Public holidays were usually celebrated only by state officials. See *Bălgarska narodna kultura. Istorico - etnographski ocherk*. Sofia 1981: 167.

<sup>99</sup> About the literacy level at that time see D. Mishkova, Literacy and Nation Building, 1878-1912, *East European Quarterly*, XXVIII, 1, 1994.

And last, but not least, what is most striking in these commemorations is their combination of traditional<sup>100</sup> and modern elements. These new cultural practices were not only a manipulation from above. Popular traditional elements were also borrowed and fostered by political activists and the government. Therefore these rituals had two distinct sources - one in popular culture, the other in the modern European patriotic tradition. In this regard, these rituals were a dialogue between the elite or modern culture and popular or traditional culture. In the 1880s and 1890s these political festivals were a complex creation including on the one hand rituals borrowed from traditional popular culture (songs, dances, collective drinking and eating) and on the other, rituals and imagery of modern urban nationalism invented by the political elite. Pagan elements were also part of the popular festivities and life. But they were influenced by a Christianity that was adapted in popular culture. Moreover, as far as popular songs played out of the formal ritual were concerned, it could be very telling that they were never mentioned explicitly in newspaper accounts. Perhaps it was thought they would contaminate the 'purity' of modern patriotism. We can only wonder whether those songs were not part of the common Ottoman heritage or the so-called *chalga* genre.

Apart from paganism and Christianity there was also a third, modern and secularised element that had a wide space.<sup>101</sup> As I mentioned above it included rituals and imagery of modern urban nationalism invented by the political elite. Here one can put speeches that were given and poems that were recited, which included the rhetoric of modern political ideologies and nationalism. The same can be said about the shouts, slogans and posters that accompanied the commemorations. This modern element is also evident in the repertoire of marches and songs played by military and civilian bands - the national anthem at the time "Shumi Maritza", the song "Tih bial Dunav" devoted to the memory of Botev and several other Botev songs. Similarly the symbols of insurrectionary banners from the past, the national tricolour as well as the uniforms of Bulgarian rebels had the same effect as the monuments devoted to the memory of the heroes.

The rituals borrowed from popular rural fairs<sup>102</sup> were integrated into the commemorations. In the late nineteenth century the rural feast days usually combined ecclesiastical and entertainment elements.<sup>103</sup> They included common customs and ritual practices like songs, dances, eating and drinking. In this regard ritual practices fully belonged within the universe of popular culture if it is defined not as the culture of the common rural and urban people and opposed to that of the elite, but as a repertoire of themes and acts ready for use by people of different social levels. The festivities themselves incorporated a strange mixture of elite and popular practices - processions, dances, songs and other activities rooted in traditional popular culture. In such a way pre-existing symbols and sentiments were mobilised for a modern national cause. In this way mobilisation made great play of local traditions, appropriating the forms of popular culture. We can see therefore in this case how the national movement could, perhaps, mobilise certain feelings of collective belonging which somewhere already existed.

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<sup>100</sup> About the role of sacred or consecrated places in Bulgarian tradition see Tz. Georgieva, *Prostranstvo i prostranstva na bălgarite XV-XVII vek*. Sofia 1999: 291-8. For the holiday in early modern Bulgarian town and the first attempts to establish modern holidays see R. Gavrilova, *Koleloto na zhivota. Vsekidnevieto na bălgarskia vāzroszdenski grad*. Sofia 1999: 280-293.

<sup>101</sup> *Balgarska narodna kultura*: 162-4.

<sup>102</sup> *Balgarska narodna kultura*: 166.

<sup>103</sup> *Balgarska narodna kultura*: 167

These popular holidays were not exhausted, but their forms were radically transformed. As ancient rituals they also served as vehicles for political expression. The ritualistic activities provided the framework for rural reactions to national appeals. Therefore nationalism and local folklore were mutually reinforcing. Reference to custom thus lent legitimacy to the government that claimed to be in defence of the country against foreign enemies.

In fact, Christianity embraced all different elements of the feasts. Religious rituals and festivals had retained their symbolic and social importance as a part of the popular culture. It is also evident from the message in a newspaper about the commemoration in Vratsa on 27 May 1890. In this regard its title 'A New Easter in Vratsa'<sup>104</sup> is very revealing. Ironically, it described the commemoration of an anticlerical author like Botev. Moreover, together with the song 'He is still alive, still alive' (Zhiv e toi, zhiv e"), devoted to Hadzgi Dimităr, the most popular Botev's songs at that time were 'Borba' ('Fight') and 'My Prayer' ('Moiata molitva'), both of them undoubtedly anti-clerical. Thus, the Bulgarian case again reaffirmed the tendency of nationalism to assimilate traditional religion and the continuing importance of religion for nationalism itself.<sup>105</sup> It also shows the religious functions and the vital role of different national historical narratives about continuity, identity, destiny and salvation, linking the sacred to the secular.<sup>106</sup>

As one can see these commemorations were an interesting and strange mixture of secular and religious ceremonies. Rural habits came together in a bizarre mix of pagan, Christian and nationalistic discourse. In this way the commemorations of modern Bulgarian 'saints' and 'martyrs' were a strange mixture of Christianity, paganism, traditional and modern entertainment, Orthodox church rituals, modern secular nationalism and traditional folklore. In fact, they were not mutually exclusive.

As I mentioned these practices and rituals meant different things to different people. This romantic nationalistic rhetoric did not appeal always to everyone but it appealed to enough people to make its influence deep and lasting. Perhaps that was the reason why although these practices were established by political radicals, in the following years they were to be appropriated by other political streams also. Even a Russophile newspaper like *Macedonia* referred to Botev in order to legitimise its Pro-Russian and Tsarist views.<sup>107</sup> Conservatives also identified with the commemorations and used them for political purposes because of the deep effect of them.<sup>108</sup> Whilst in 1885, referring to the commemoration at Buzludzga, Jurukov said that he did not like the worshipping of 'different saints', in 1889 another conservative politician and merchant Dimitri Papazoglu promised to build a monument to Hadzgi Dimităr<sup>109</sup> and according to some sources he gave 1000 leva for this undertaking.<sup>110</sup> Bulgarian pupils from the secondary schools conceived their rioting against the local school administration in accordance with the Bulgarian revolutionary movement in the past

<sup>104</sup> *Nova Bălgaria*, 9 June 1890, No. 2; 16 June 1890, No. 3.

<sup>105</sup> See for example J. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982.; M. Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, 1993.; A. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*. London and New York 1998. In his seminal "Imagined Communities" B. Anderson also paid attention to the similarities between nationalism and religion. B. Anderson *Imagined Communities*, 1991: 5, 11-2.

<sup>106</sup> Among many cases see for example An. Smith, 'The resurgence of nationalism? Myth and memory in the renewal of nations', *British Journal of Sociology*, XLVII, 1996, 4, 575-98.

<sup>107</sup> *Makedonia*, 20 Jan 1890, No. 18.

<sup>108</sup> K. Bozveliev, *Moite spomeni*. Sofia 1993: 186-97

<sup>109</sup> *Napred*, 16 July 1889, No. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Svoboda*, 28 July 1890, No. 381.

and used certain symbols, language and imagery from April 1876.<sup>111</sup> Even Bulgarian socialists made a systematic attempt to counterpose their own carefully articulated version of the national revolutionary past with a variety of symbolism and ritual expression.<sup>112</sup> This counter-mythology of the past was an important aspect of this activity.<sup>113</sup> In such a way these rituals of a new political repertoire were a means of popular mobilisation for political purposes that received wide diffusion in the following years.

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<sup>111</sup> J. Pekarev, *Moite politiko-obshtestveni spomeni*. Sofia 1929: 72.

<sup>112</sup> C. Petrov, *Buzludganskite tǎrzhestva*, D. Blagoev, *Nashite apostoli*. Sofia 1886; K. Bozveliev, *Moite spomeni*. Sofia 1993: 40, 186-97; Den, Sept-Oct. 1891, No. 9-10, Hristo Botev: esp 218-21.; March-April- May 1892, No. 1: esp 222-71.

<sup>113</sup> *Rositsa*, 16 July 1886, No. 7.



## Celebrating the nation: the case of Upper Silesia after the plebiscite in 1921

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The territory discussed in this article was for centuries the object of conflicts and its borders often altered. Control of some parts of Upper Silesia changed several times during the twentieth century. However, the activity of the states concerned was not only confined to the shifting borders. The Polish and German governments both tried to assert the transformation of the nationality of the population and the standardisation of its identity on the basis of ethno-linguistic nationalism.

The handling of controversial aspects of Polish history is still a problem which cannot be ignored. Subjects relating to state policy in the western parts of pre-war Poland have been explored, but most projects have been intended to justify and defend Polish national policy. On the other hand, post-war research by German scholars has neglected the conflict between the nationalities in Upper Silesia. It is only recently that new material has been published in England, Germany and Poland. This examined the problem of the acceptance of national orientations in the already existing state rather than the broader topic of the formation and establishment of nationalistic movements aimed (only) at the creation of a nation-state.<sup>1</sup>

While the new research has generated relevant results, they have however, concentrated only on the broader field of national policy, above all on the nationalisation of the economy, language, education and the policy of changing names. Against this backdrop, this paper points out the effects of the political nationalisation on the form and content of state celebrations in Upper Silesia in the following remarks.

The most important issues are partly connected with the analyses mentioned above. According to Linek, the years 1922-1950 covered 'a time of dynamic activity by the nation-state' in Upper Silesia and were characterised by holistic actions by the state aimed at implementing principles of an ethnic nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Arguing along the same lines, Hobsbawm named his chapter covering the years 1918-1950 'The apogee of nationalism'.<sup>3</sup> The question that results from those observations is to what extent state celebrations were performed for nationalising purposes. Moreover, I try to examine how far the social inclusion or exclusion that could be activated before or during the festivities depended on nationalistic principles. Finally, I aim to look at how the population of Upper Silesia reacted to the ideas created by the state authorities.

The state celebrations that constitute the core of this case study can be defined, on the one hand, as forms of the representation of the national policy in public; and, on the other, as a collective experience of the participating individuals.<sup>4</sup> They are planned

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<sup>1</sup>See: Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* Lexington 1993; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* Cambridge 1996; Matthias Kneip, *Die deutsche Sprache in Oberschlesien. Untersuchungen zur politischen Rolle der deutschen Sprache als Minderheitensprache 1921-1998* Dortmund 1999; Bernard Linek, 'Deutsche und polnische nationale Politik in Oberschlesien 1922-1989', in *Die Grenzen der Nationen: Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit*, ed. Kai Struve and Phillip Ther Marburg 2002:137-68.

<sup>2</sup> Linek, 140.

<sup>3</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge 1990).

<sup>4</sup> See: Winfried Gebhardt, *Fest, Feier und Alltag. Über die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit des Menschen und ihre Deutung*. Frankfurt/M 1987: 63ff.; *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats. Politische Feiern in*

or founded, and throughout related to a concrete, usually historical occurrence. They offer the state an exceptional opportunity beyond everyday life to reflect on the origin, importance and future of the groups and/or institutions, to enact them in public and, thus, to present them on a broad social basis.<sup>5</sup> The festivities have a potential strength to become an important medium for the codification, transmission and appropriation of collective models and to stress historical continuity and cultural unity.<sup>6</sup>

The selected case study deals with the Upper Silesian plebiscite celebrations. These celebrations represented the biggest enactments of the Polish and the German state power in Upper Silesia in the period from 1922 to 1932 and, thus, are also best documented. Most source material used for this research comes from the contemporary press and public as well as secret reports by civil servants. This case study begins in 1922. In this year, the international allied commission abandoned its governance and safety tasks in the controversial borderland, and the Upper Silesian administration was assumed by the Polish and the German states. This development facilitated the organisation of Polish and German celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite from 1923 onwards. The last celebration of the plebiscite organised by state authorities took place in 1932. This year marks the final date of this paper.

### *Nationalism and the Upper Silesians before the plebiscite*

With the increase in national consciousness and a progressing polarisation of national attitudes during the 'Kulturkampf' the Upper Silesian ethnic borderland, home to strategically crucial heavy industry, changed into an area defined by nationalism in the early years of the twentieth century. After the defeat of Austria and Germany in the First World War, the new Polish state claimed the entire region on the grounds that ethnic Polish people lived there. As a result of German and Polish military actions (the so-called 'Silesian uprisings') and a plebiscite, Upper Silesia was divided between Poland and Germany in 1922, and became the borderland of two nation-states.

Even though Germany had lost large parts of its eastern territories, it still contained sections of Polish-speaking or Slavophone people, and because of the readjustment of European borders after the First World War, a German minority now found itself citizens of Poland. Relations between the nationalities in Upper Silesia were already complicated at the time when the country was still part of the German empire. The intensification of political rivalry and agitation was reflected in a specific way in the consciousness of the local population, which took place before the plebiscite. Yet, many Silesians remained unimpressed despite the sharp national mobilisation and even bloody fights.

The language problem was related to the ethnic process of identification. Upper Silesians frequently had a command of both German and Polish, leading to a situation in which the language was not a decisive criterion for nationality. For a considerable part of the population the daily use of the Slavophone Upper Silesian dialect was not necessarily synonymous with Polish national consciousness. About 60% of the Upper

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*Italien und Deutschland seit 1860/1871*, ed. Sabine Behrenbeck and Alexander Nützenadel Köln 2000; Hans-Juergen Luesebrink, 'Das Fest', in *Orte des Alltags. Miniaturen aus der europäischen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Heinz-Gerhardt Haupt München 1994: 202-6.

<sup>5</sup> See: *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation, American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Geneviève Fabre, Juergen Heidekind and Kai Dreisbach New York 2001.

<sup>6</sup> See: Behrenbeck and Nuetzenadel: 13; *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Karin Friedrich London 2000.

Silesian population, according to the official census of 1910, spoke Polish or regional Slavonic dialects. The plebiscite in 1921 had already shown that only 40 percent voted for Polish control of Upper Silesia. Moreover, in this region over 90% of the population were Roman Catholic. Religion often influenced the life of the inhabitants in much a stronger way than national divisions, and formed a common ground and, thus, a base for deeper understanding between both ethnic groups.

The governments of Poland and Germany realised that some people in the Upper Silesian border area were indifferent to their national identity. From the perspective of the state apparatuses, the Upper Silesians could be assigned to three national defined groups.<sup>7</sup> Two of them developed clear dividing lines, i.e. the group of the 'indigenous' and the 'strangers'. However, the attitude of the third group was contradictory to the idea of the nation-state propagated in Warsaw or Berlin. These people were described - in terms of the nationalistic discourse - as national 'unstable' or 'undecided', and appeared in the reports as a group with 'unconscious national attitude'. Additionally, they often showed resistance to national declarations and preferred other forms of identification, e.g. regional or religious ones, as opposed to national identity. These circumstances formed a focus for conflict. However, propaganda measures introduced by the states covered not only the nationally 'problematical' group, but also other parts of the population which were exposed to the nationality policy. The whole population of Upper Silesia therefore became an object of mobilisation, further consolidation, assimilation, or societal exclusion. The official state celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite revealed this development.

#### *The celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite in German Upper Silesia*

On 20 March 1921, the plebiscite that was to decide upon the state affiliation of Upper Silesia took place. A total of 60% of the people voted for the annexation of Upper Silesia to Germany. For these people it meant that the whole plebiscite area would not be separated from the German Republic; the day that the results were announced, many spontaneous ceremonies were held. That the region remained divided by a state border many supporters of Germany regarded as 'unfair' and 'treacherous'. Every year in commemoration of the plebiscite, the German population organised protest demonstrations against the decisions of the allies as well as against the whole system constructed at Versailles.

The first celebration of the anniversary of the plebiscite in 1923 occurred without planning or a unified central idea. Only Alfons Proske, the Regierungspraesident in Oppeln/Opole, made an appeal to celebrate the anniversary in March 1924. As a local official of highest rank, he insinuated unambiguously that Upper Silesia and its population was torn apart by allied order against the true will of the Upper Silesian people. According to him, the division was the root of the region's poor economic situation, particularly among the German resettlers from Polish Upper Silesia. Proske called for loyalty to the lost parts of Upper Silesia and to the whole fatherland, and for commemoration of the injustice of the border area. Commemorations of the plebiscite were organised under his motto on 20 and 21 March.

Proske's call contributed to the announcement of the fundamental points of the German government's propaganda during the ceremonies. Above all the division of the territory was deemed unacceptable and regarded as Franco-Polish revenge. The celebration of the plebiscite's anniversary gave the German authorities a perfect

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<sup>7</sup> Linek, 144.



opportunity to show the world that their country had the right to govern the whole of Upper Silesia after March 1921. Accordingly, voices for a removal of the 'unfair' border became very clear and explicit. Appealing to the solidarity of their nation, the government pointed out that the Germans remaining in the Polish part of Upper Silesia were not forgotten, and that they were a valuable part of the nation. The emphasis on national consolidation was directed toward both, the German Diaspora in Upper Silesia, and toward the Polish state that dominated there. The authorities also styled everyday life in Upper Silesia as daily national combat and as experienced patriotism.<sup>8</sup>

Over the years, the course and contents of the festivities display a rising interest by the authorities. In 1923, high officials did not show much interest in organising commemorations; however, patriotic events with a unified programme were already propagated by a set of newspaper articles that published the call of Proske in 1924. A year later, the anniversary of the Upper Silesian vote took a genuinely official form, and included large events in many cities, framed by festive speeches given by civil servants.<sup>9</sup>

The fifth anniversary of the plebiscite in 1926 formed a temporary zenith of state participation in the celebrations. The changed international situation of Germany, and internal developments in Upper Silesia contributed to the fact that the periphery of the German empire moved to the centre of public life. A year before, two political events took place and produced an additional burden for German-Polish relations, in particular for the Upper Silesian issue. The so-called custom war which concentrated on the export and import of Upper Silesian coal broke out and escalated on the new German-Polish border in the summer of 1925. A few months later, diplomatic negotiations in Locarno were completed and confirmed the international acknowledgment of the French-German and the Belgian-German borders; however, they kept open the future of the East German border. The two occurrences gave rise to a very emotional exchange of arguments between the German and Polish governments which was expressed, *inter alia*, in official celebrations of the plebiscite, and had direct influence on the form and content of the ceremonies.

All political parties represented in the government as well as various paramilitary and homeland associations, such as *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier* [The United Federations of Homeland-Faithful Upper Silesians] and *Jungdeutschland* [Young Germany] responsible for nationalist propaganda among the Upper Silesian people took part in the arrangement of the celebrations. The first ceremonies took place in various Upper Silesian cities on 21 March and consisted of processions joined by representatives of the regional elite which became the speaker of the state government. The fifth anniversary of the plebiscite was crowned in the capital of the German Upper Silesia with costly official celebrations one week later.<sup>10</sup> National flags were put up everywhere in the city as a welcome and an honour gate with the inscription 'Gedenke, dass du ein Deutscher bist' [Commemorate that you are a German] was erected on the main street. Over two hundred prominent personalities of Upper Silesia, among them representatives of the local government, municipalities, clubs and societies as well as all local clergy and military participated in the

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<sup>8</sup> *Oberschlesische Volksstimme* 81/21.3.1924; *Oberschlesische Zeitung* 68/20.3.1924; Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie [Archive of New Records in Warsaw] (AAN), Konsulat Generalny RP w Opolu, Sign. 162, Consul Szczepański's report to the foreign office No. 82 / 26.3.1924, and No. 118 / 26.3.1925.

<sup>9</sup> *Oberschlesische Morgenzeitung* 68/20.3.1925; *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost* 82/23.3.1925.

<sup>10</sup> *Oberschlesische Volksstimme* 75/29.3.1926.

ceremonies. However, it was the numerous guests from Berlin, such as the German Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Kuelz and the Prussian Minister of the Interior Carl Severing, that gave the whole event its importance. At the market square, they were greeted by the public from all windows, balconies, and even roofs. The first part of the official ceremony took place in the well decorated city theatre and was framed by musical presentations of local choirs and orchestras, as well as by a speech from Kuelz. Later, the second ceremony at the market square was followed with a speech by Severing.

The two speakers thanked the Upper Silesians for the national fight during the plebiscite and stressed the territorial integrity of the nation.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, they emphasised ties to their compatriots who lived as national minorities in other states. The ministers also pointed out the 'great, united, internally connected community' of the Germans. Severing used martial rhetoric and gave the Upper Silesian plebiscite the character of a military victory that has to be commemorated festively like the other glorious battles of the German nation. In this way, he tried to confirm a political myth and to declare the participants of the battle for the nation as national heroes. On the other hand, he contrasted the cultural superiority of the Germans with the Poles who he pictured as violent Slavonic people, and as the enemy who had to be overcome with weapons of the higher German spirit. A common singing of the *Deutschlandlied* completed the celebrations.

In the commemorative speeches and during the course of the celebrations the rank of the Polish minority in the German national policy is very characteristic. The national minorities within the German borders did not represent a substantial problem for the German state in domestic politics. Both groups of people, those not yet nationalised, and those Upper Silesians who subscribed to Polish national consciousness, were perceived by the German government as politically and economically harmless. The Upper Silesians with 'unconscious national attitude' had no representation of their own with clear political outlines and were in the arms of the Catholic Centre Party. Moreover, over 70,000 Polish speaking or Slavophone people among them nearly all the members of the native elite left the German part of Upper Silesia after the plebiscite.<sup>12</sup> The immigration of the Polish leaders was caused to a certain degree by excesses and assaults of the paramilitary and nationalist German associations and contributed to the fact that the members of the Polish minority that remained in Western Upper Silesia were regarded as 'germanizable' [*eindeutschungsfähig*], meaning that they would be able to become German; therefore, they were neither excluded from the ceremonies nor attacked during the national celebrations. The local authorities strove rather to encourage the members of the Polish minority and the 'nationally undecided' Upper Silesians to subscribe to the German spirit [*Gesinnung*] by the state celebrations.<sup>13</sup>

The celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite continued until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Hitler introduced important modifications in the Upper Silesian holiday calendar. Above all, he cancelled the local festivities of the anniversary of the plebiscite and shifted the main focus to the national celebration of May Day as an additional means of *Gleichschaltung* in Germany. As soon as the Nazis came to power, they initiated propaganda for a complete separation of Slavonic and Germanic

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<sup>11</sup> According to a newspaper article by Schadewald in *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost* in: AAN, Consul Szczepański's report to the foreign office No. 147 / 30.3.1926.

<sup>12</sup> Linek 147.

<sup>13</sup> See for example the speech of the Landrat in Beuthen, Kurt Urbanek in: *Oberschlesische Zeitung* 68/20.3.1924, or the article on the title-page in *Oberschlesische Volksstimme* 75/29.3.1926.

elements according to their racial policy and the mechanisms of exclusion were applied at the national socialist celebrations. The takeover of power by the NSDAP had a significant influence on the festive culture in Western Upper Silesia. Hitler's idea of a pure German race had weakened measures of nationalisation in the borderland for several years, even though the long-term purpose was the liquidation of the Polish/Slavonic minority. Yet, regarding oneself as a member of the Polish minority became more popular in the first years after the takeover, when the Nazis had dissolved the German Catholic party and many other organisations whose activists had experienced the situation in the Upper Silesian borderland. At the same time, those activists regarded the Polish minority as not worthy of being part of the German community, the 'Volksgemeinschaft'. As a result Catholics in particular found a niche within Polish organisations where they could continue their activities and holidays.

However, these conditions did not last for long, because the situation of the Polish minority became precarious as German-Polish relations deteriorated further. Open terror reigned in Upper Silesia in 1939. Public festivities as well as public church ceremonies held in the Polish language were forbidden. Those who opposed government decisions were exposed to persecution by the state. Yet, the situation in the last twelve months before the outbreak of the war was untypical of Upper Silesian relations between the world wars. It has to be emphasised that celebrating national holidays in the German part of Upper Silesia served the unification of the people without regard to ethnic affiliation for a considerable time. The confrontational efforts during the national celebrations were introduced with the race policy of Nazi-Germany in the late 30s.

The Polish minority issue was not the centre of attention for the governing elite of the Weimar Republic. The national policy was focused on solidarity with the German minority beyond the borders. The German *Volksgemeinschaft* in Poland could be used for the purposes of foreign policy and passed as a justification for revisionist demands in the East.<sup>14</sup> For these reasons, state authorities aimed to develop the picture of a 'bleeding border' which always emerged in the celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite. In this way, they intended to emphasise alleged or real suffering of the Germans under the rule of the majority nation. The maintenance of the relationships to the German Diaspora and the national fight for the Germans abroad [Auslanddeutschtum] performed a compensating role in the Weimar Republic, which suffered from the consequences of the war and the economic crisis.

The commemorative speeches and the course of the anniversary of the plebiscite in Western Upper Silesia clarified the principles and the political myth of the German nation-state. At the same time, they were an expression of the nationalising character of the celebrations. They stressed the character of German homeland nationalism which was directed 'outward', across the boundaries of territory and citizenship, toward members of 'their own' ethnic nationality, that is toward persons who 'belong' (or can claim to belong) to the external national homeland by ethnonational affinity, although they reside in and are (ordinarily) citizens of other states.<sup>15</sup> The revisionist programme coded in the German celebrations released an opposite reaction on the Polish side of the border, where the nationalising nationalism was directed 'inward' by the state, toward its own territories and citizenship.<sup>16</sup> In this constellation of two types of nationalising states, they had to clash head-on. Therefore, the Polish

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<sup>14</sup> Linek 148; Brubaker 123f.

<sup>15</sup> Brubaker 111.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

government introduced its own propaganda plan and announced it during the Polish festivities of the anniversary of the plebiscite.

### *The Celebrations of the Anniversary of the Plebiscite in Polish Upper Silesia*

There were political groups on both sides of the border in Upper Silesia who were ideologically close, and whose leaders had first-hand experience of government in the Prussian state. They gained their political know-how under similar circumstances and were advocates of the constitutional state and parliamentary system. The Catholic Centre Party governed in the province of Oppeln until the National Socialist seizure of power. All heads of the local government: Joseph Bitta (until 1923), Alfons Proske (until 1929), and Hans Lukaschek (until 1933) came from the local German elite. In contrast to this, in Polish Upper Silesia another practice developed and local officials of the highest rank *wojewoda* came from outside the area. Nevertheless, the Christian Democrats played an important role in the political development in Kattowitz/Katowice. Their leader Wojciech Korfanty had political allies in Józef Rymer, the first *wojewoda*, and in Konstanty Wolny, the first marshal of the local Silesian parliament.<sup>17</sup> However, the ideological propinquity had no impact on the political activity of both governments, which did not make attempts for an approach across national boundaries. This was expressed in the official celebrations, which reflected upon the recent fights and the national goals of the governments from Warsaw and Berlin. Consequently, existing similarities had no chance to come to the fore during the commemorations of the plebiscite.

Only the fourth anniversary was marked with occasional celebrations in the Polish province of Silesia. Two reasons can be given for this. On the one hand, the authorities were not interested in bringing back the memory of the disappointing result of the plebiscite in the light of the post-war expectation of the Polish side. On the other hand, only the considerable activity of the government in Oppeln and its direct involvement in carrying out German festivities generated the organisation of propagandistic countermeasures. The most important press organs massively campaigned for the broad participation in the rallies in Katowice, Tarnowitz/Tarnowskie Góry, and Rybnik and in other protest actions against the revisionist German policy.<sup>18</sup> According to the press, over 50,000 people took part at the procession in Katowice on 15 March 1925 and passed a common resolution of the combat readiness of the Silesian people for inviolability of the Polish borders and for unity with the Polish motherland. Furthermore, the German minority was mentioned as an internal danger.<sup>19</sup> Large-scale Polish celebration was provoked only one year later after the ceremonies for the fifth anniversary in the German Upper Silesia.

Similarly to the German part, nationalistic associations, such as The Federation for Defence of the Western Areas (*Związek Obrony Kresów Zachodnich*) and The Federation of Silesian Insurgents (*Związek Powstańców Śląskich*) took an active part in the preparation of the celebrations. This confirmed the close symbiosis between the national movement and the state and gave reliable means of influence on the society to the governing elite. The well-developed nationalistic associations and federations

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<sup>17</sup> Maria W. Wanatowicz, *Historia społeczno-polityczna Górnego Śląska w latach 1918-1945* Katowice 1994): 47ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Polonia* 74/16.3.1925.

<sup>19</sup> Bogdan Cimała, 'Obchody rocznic plebiscytu na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1924-1927', *Kronika Katowic* 6 1994: 121-2; Edward Mendel, 'Obchody rocznic powstań śląskich przez społeczeństwo polskie do 1939', *Encyklopedia powstań śląskich* 1982: 336

were always helpful in relations with the state and, in the end, so effectively subjugated the needs of the nation-state that gradually they became parts of national structures. Accordingly, the arrangement of state celebrations and the procurement of national propaganda were entrusted to nationalistic organisations.<sup>20</sup>

The ceremonial procession took place in Katowice on 21 March 1926 and, according to the Polish press, it drew together almost 80,000 people, among them over 400 standard-bearers and nearly 100 musical bands. After commemorative speeches, a common resolution was accepted in which the inviolability of the Polish borders, the guarantee of the minority rights for Polish people in Germany, and the exclusion of Germany from the League of Nations' council was demanded once more. Moreover, the resolution's authors required to dissolve the most important umbrella organisation of the German minority in the Polish part of Upper Silesia, The German National Association for Polish Silesia (*Deutscher Volksbund fuer Polnisch-Schlesien*).

The German minority in Polish Silesia held a stronger social and financial position than the Polish one on the other side of the border. Reproaching the German minority and the demand for the dissolution of the minority associations which appeared during the celebrations, reflected the principles of Poland's national policy. Accordingly, the German minority in Western Poland was regarded as one of the biggest dangers for state integrity. The first Polish government of Ignacy Paderewski had already developed a framework for the relations to the Germans settled in Poland in January 1919.<sup>21</sup> (1) removal of the Germans from the administration, (2) measures against the education of Polish children at German schools, (3) fight against the germanisation of the Protestant population, (4) support for Polish organisations in the fight against the Germanism [*niemieckość*], and (5) economic balance between the Polish and the German population. The governments kept to these guidelines of the nationalising state and, consequently, the national celebrations in the borderlands often had an anti-German character. In Upper Silesia, this meant that the people with a German national consciousness were regarded as 'state strangers', and excluded from participation in the events of the nation-state.

The absence of government representatives from the state capital, particularly on the fifth anniversary, was a remarkable contrast to the German ceremonies. Some parts of the Silesian press reprimanded this 'scandalous' absence, and the Polish consul in Beuthen/Bytom criticised the government agencies.<sup>22</sup> Szczepański compared the propaganda means used on the fifth anniversary of the plebiscite in both states and in the report to the Polish minister of foreign affairs demanded to use propaganda measures more effectively and resolutely. This report illustrates that the Warsaw government had a moderate interest in the nationalisation of the Upper Silesian celebrations and, at this time, used them only occasionally in order to give the national policy more expression.

The sixth anniversary of the plebiscite in 1927 took place under a new government. After the May revolution of 1926, the Sanacja group, rather left-oriented and linked to Marshal Józef Piłsudski, came to power and the post of the Silesian *wojewoda* was assumed by Michał Grażyński, who came from Galicia, but had participated in the Upper Silesian uprisings. However, this change did not contribute to mitigation of national policy regarding the German minority in Upper Silesia. In contrast to the conception of Marshal Piłsudski, who aimed to establish a Polish nation consisting of different nationalities and to assimilate the existing minorities with state pressure,

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<sup>20</sup> *Biuletyn Związku Obrony Kresów Zachodnich* 11(16)/14.3.1926.

<sup>21</sup> Dariusz Matelski, *Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku*. Warszawa 1999: 66.

<sup>22</sup> AAN, Consul Szczepański's report to the foreign office No. 147 / 30.3.1926.

Grażyński pursued his own political blueprint with respect to national issues. In his welcoming speech, he declared the goal of the unification of Upper Silesia with the Polish state without compromise.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, he carried out staff changes in his office and filled the posts with people from nationalist associations.

As a consequence, the celebrations of the sixth anniversary of the plebiscite were organised by the nationalist federations and expressed the nationalist character of the new Upper Silesian political elite.<sup>24</sup> The festivities on 20 March 1927 included a large rally of paramilitary organisations before the representatives of the central government and the parliament. Commemorative speeches were delivered by the Polish Minister of Finance, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, *wojewoda* Grażyński, and other members of the Polish and local parliament. The content of these communications confirmed the goals of the national policy of the Polish republic in the western areas. The speakers strove for a serious and patriotic note, but without unnecessary aggression in relation towards the German state.<sup>25</sup>

The sixth anniversary of the Upper Silesian vote represented the pinnacle and, at the same time, the end of the plebiscite's celebrations organised by the state authorities in Polish Upper Silesia. The new Silesian *wojewoda* had other conceptions of the national policy in his area of responsibility. Grażyński concentrated harder on the stimulation of the anti-German uprising's tradition and shifted the main focus of the state ceremonies to 3 May. The importance of the celebration of this day was two-fold in Upper Silesia. On the state level, it was the anniversary of the first Polish Constitution of 1791; on the local Upper Silesian level, it was the celebration of the third and biggest Polish uprising in 1921. The modified celebrations displayed an extremely military character, and were obviously directed against the Germans. The former insurgents, i.e. the most dogged pursuers of the German minority, became the leading performers of the celebrations. Moreover, Grażyński could also fall back on the increased opportunities of an authoritarian Polish state. This led to many incidents on the national level in the first days of May after the introduction of its celebration, all the more because the insurgents felt unpunished under the protection of the *wojewoda*. Furthermore, the powerful military anti-German manifestations on 3 May generated a further split in society because they did not meet any support in the circles of the Christian democrats, who were still powerful in Catholic Upper Silesia.

However, decisive for Grażyński's hard and confrontational policy with regard to the German minority was the character of his political milieu, whose backbone constituted The Federation for Defence of the Western Areas and The Federation of Silesian Insurgents. These groups belonged to the new, young and powerful elites of independent Poland and were shaped by common armed fights for the establishment of a Polish state. This life experience made them assume an attitude that preferred the nationalising form of nationalism to the principles of the constitutional state and of the democratic system in Upper Silesia.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the political and social pressure on the German minority in the Polish Upper Silesia became stronger, and was reflected in the militarised celebrations of the uprising's tradition.

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<sup>23</sup> *Polonia* 246/7.9.1926.

<sup>24</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach [State Archive Katowice] (APK), Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski, Wydział Prezydialny, Sign. 18/ p. 8-10.

<sup>25</sup> *Gazeta Robotnicza* 62/17.3.1927, 64/19.3.1927, 65/20.3.1927; *Polska Zachodnia* 17., 18., 20.3.1927; *Polonia* 79/21.3.1927.

<sup>26</sup> Linek 149.

### *Reactions towards nationalising propaganda*

The last point of this article discusses the attitude of the Upper Silesian population towards the propaganda of nationalisation presented during the celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite. These remarks are only based on official state documents and local newspaper articles and can therefore not present a complete attitude of the Upper Silesians, and the extent of their involvement in the holidays. It is also extremely difficult to examine different forms of the perception of the state propaganda, when the objects of this propaganda produced only few historical sources.

An approximate number of the participants can be drawn from official documents. The national celebrations, particularly those of the fifth or tenth anniversary of the plebiscite, were mostly very well attended, even by a hundred thousand people.<sup>27</sup> The authorities organised the festivities at the most important central places of the cities, market squares, or sports stadiums for instance, which were technically the most suitable places for big events. Access to the places of the event was usually made easier by free or reduced carriage, and people were sometimes encouraged to participate in the ceremonies by receiving a free meal. This probably had a certain influence on attendance figures, particularly in times of economic crisis. Accordingly, the stadiums and market places were filled with large crowds. The official documents indicate only very slightly whether these people were truly interested in the celebrations or whether different motives induced them to take part in public enactments of the nation-state. I can only assume that there were various perceptions, extended from an extremely patriotic, if not chauvinistic position, up to an attitude indifferent towards nationalism. This inhomogeneous image confused the authorities. The Polish and German authorities that followed the plebiscite, or the Nazis, as well as the Polish authoritarian government, had tremendous problems in determining the national identity of some parts of the population that took part in the celebrations, although they strove for a highly differentiated image of the nationalities in this region.

It cannot be determined easily how far the propagandised image of the two conflicting nations corresponded to reality, but even official documents suggest that there were many situations in Upper Silesia when the nationalising purposes did not come to the fore during festivities. An occurrence from everyday life may serve as a flagrant example. A regional leader of the NSDAP reported to Berlin – exactly on the second anniversary of the Nazis takeover of power - on a wedding celebration, which was well attended by Polish and German speaking people and which lasted over two days. It alarmed his superior that his deputy in the regional structure of NSDAP Hans Witolla got married to a radical pro-Polish activist's stepdaughter. He wrote:

I consider this [wedding] impossible for reasons of the secrecy of different political procedures in the district leadership, particularly Buhl [bride's stepfather] must be called prominent and the most radical Polish minority leader. His name appears again and again in the features of the Polish press as well as in the reports of the secret state police. All Polish meetings take place in Buhl's house. It is said that Wittola also was in

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<sup>27</sup> See pictures and commentaries in the local newspapers on 20-23 March 1926 or 1931 e.g. in *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, *Oberschlesische Zeitung*, or *Polska Zachodnia*.

Buhl's house during Polish meetings. However, I do not know anything about facts which Witolla noticed or experienced there and which are important for the responsible authorities.

Approx. 150 people participated in the wedding reception in the Hotel Lax. [...] The following day, the wedding was celebrated at Buhl's house.

I cannot imagine that Witolla would have received the consent to this marriage from the regional NSDAP-apparatus, particularly according to the situation in the Upper Silesian plebiscite area.<sup>28</sup>

The population in ethnically mixed Upper Silesia had the opportunity to choose from a rich spectrum of civilization and culture and to decide circumstantially which side of identification was better to prefer. There are many examples in official reports, particularly concerning the activities and holidays of youth associations. Even in the late 1930s, there were such cases in the Upper Silesian borderland, which were unheard of in the Central Polish or German regions. In a report from one village, a policeman wrote that several members of the local Hitler Jugend, including its leader, took part in festivities of their rival Polish youth association.<sup>29</sup> At the end of the letter he admitted that there was no-one in the village who would qualify as the leader of the HJ. In general, youth and sport associations' holidays were a sphere where nationalism played a limited role. The members of Polish clubs participated in German meetings until the outbreak of the war and those Upper Silesians, who tended towards German identity, in Polish events. The authorities were extremely indignant about this. They did not notice that the national affiliation of associations designed by them was not adopted by the Upper Silesians. In the eyes of the native population, most associations were linked to their homeland, or were simply Silesian.

The lack of chauvinism among the Upper Silesians also manifested itself in cultural events, which were attended by German speaking and Slavophone people. What was more important to them was the quality of the event or the ease of access. Their negligence to subscribe to national slogans was noticed by the German government as well as by the Polish authorities in their part of the region. Contrary to the central parts of the nation-states, one could not find apparently objective bases of national consciousness like language, religion, or descent. An identity related to the homeland remained the most important in Upper Silesia and usually dominated a secondary German or Polish national consciousness until 1945.<sup>30</sup> The bi-linguistic and bi-cultural competence of the Upper Silesian population could appear even during the same evening. In 1929 the chief of police in Gleiwitz/Gliwice reported on a Polish singing choral society from a suburb of the city. The society had organised a celebration with a guest choir which sang Polish songs. Subsequently, most guests as well as the organisers, who all belonged to the Slavophone part of the population, took part in a party and talked German most of the time. Having had a couple of

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<sup>28</sup> Report from the Landrat in Oppeln to the Regierungspraesident on 31.1.1935, in *Deutsche und Polen zwischen den Kriegen. Minderheitenstatus und "Volkstumskampf" im Grenzgebiet*, ed. by Rudolf Jaworski and Marian Wojciechowski München 1997: 911 (translated by author).

<sup>29</sup> Report from the Polizeipraesident in Gleiwitz to the Regierungspraesident in Oppeln on 12.4.1938, in *ibid.*: 949.

<sup>30</sup> Philipp Ther, 'Die Grenzen des Nationalismus: Der Wandel von Identitäten in Oberschlesien von der Mitte des 19. Jhs. bis 1939' in *Nationalismen in Europa. West- und Osteuropa im Vergleich*, ed. Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Ute Leonhard Göttingen: 2001: 332.



drinks, the participants began singing some German drinking and soldier songs. The police officer continued to report:

The two Polish minority leaders [Lapa and Aulich] persuaded people not to sing German songs; but their interference was not considered. Some invited guests –members of the Polish minority – were offended by Lapa's behaviour. [...] Finally, Lapa antagonised so many among his fellowmen that he did not have enough courage to go home to Ostroppa after the party, but he went to the city centre in company of political police officials in order to avoid an assault.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, one must underline that the emphasising of the national identities was changeable or not fixed in wide sections of the population of Upper Silesia. The decisive factor here was the attractiveness of the national and political offers, which were attentively observed by Upper Silesians. Accordingly, their (temporal) accentuation of the German or Polish national identity corresponded to the economic and political situation in Germany and Poland. However, these possibilities of identification did not exclude one another and could be activated, maintained, or also concealed depending on the context of everyday life.<sup>32</sup>

### *Conclusions*

By analysing the German and Polish celebrations of the anniversary of the plebiscite, I have tried to follow up the nationalising activity of the states expressed in the form and content of the ceremonies. I can give an affirmative response to the question posed at the beginning, whether the German and Polish authorities used the celebrations for purposes of national policy. The structures of the two states were dominated by national movements and, accordingly, the state realised their political goals. Examining celebrations, we could see that although both governments of Upper Silesia were ideologically close, none made attempts for an approach. The Polish and German Christian democrats did not develop an alternative programme; moreover, they encouraged ethnic nationalism and thereby intensified the separation of a 'bleeding border'. After the political revolutions in both parts of Upper Silesia, extreme nationalising groups came to power and as a result clashed head-on. New nationalising guidelines were expressed in the state celebrations, which became more militarised and tended to exclude members of the national minority.

The state celebrations in particular turned out to be a place of social exclusion or inclusion. In the Polish part of Upper Silesia, they were created or modified to integrate Silesian society into the Polish nation-state and its culture after more than five centuries of separation. In principle, this concept did not include members of the German minority. In addition, the Silesian *wojewoda*, Grażyński, contributed to a further discouraging of the societal integration within the Polish population. The inappropriate state policy during holidays did not solidify the society as a whole, but only one group that supported the government. The way the holidays were celebrated depended on the existing policy and was a result of this policy.

Summing up, I can maintain that Germany and Poland used similar instruments of state propaganda in the conflict over Upper Silesia. One of them was the celebration

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<sup>31</sup> Report from the Polizeipraesident in Gleiwitz to the Oberpraesident in Oppeln on 5.1.1929 in *ibidem*: 933 (translated by author).

<sup>32</sup> Ther, 344.

of the anniversary of the plebiscite, which took the form of the representation of the national policy in public. But the efforts to use celebrations in a definite way had different effects on society. Upper Silesians reacted very differently towards national holidays. Their response ranged from a complete acceptance or enthusiasm for national ideas proclaimed during festivities to a passive attendance or, in a few cases, even disturbances. Yet, this is not unusual for peripheral regions such as Upper Silesia, where history has fixed the phenomena typical for a majority of ethnic borderlands. One such phenomenon is indifference or even resistance against ethno-linguistic nationalism frequently manifest in circumstantial and pragmatical identification and determined by the practical wisdom of everyday life in the borderland of nation-states.



Three states, one common past: chance or malediction?  
The role of history and historiography in the formation of collective  
identities and mutual relations in Belarus, Lithuania and Poland<sup>1</sup>

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Common experiences and a common past offer a special possibility for good relations. But having a common past also can create disharmony. If one has to share traditions with others, it becomes more difficult to find specific elements to call one's 'own'. So especially in a situation of intensive search for identity a common past may be harmful to the formation of one's own identity and to mutual relations as well. In the case of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland after 1989, both generalisations hold true. While Polish-Lithuanian relations are excellent, Lithuanian-Belarusian relations are rather complicated. The reasons for this are not only political or economic, but mainly a consequence of the important role history and historiography play in the process of collective identity formation. The present article will examine the structure of this process.

*History as a means of legitimization of nation-states*

After 1989, not only Soviet satellite states, up until then bound to the Soviet Union by the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, acquired real independence, but also former Soviet republics recreated themselves as independent states. One of the main tasks of these new political units was the formation of collective identities which would confirm their existence.<sup>2</sup> This was done by means of history. All new states claimed themselves as old ones, having been victims of an alien system of repression that they had now got rid of.

It is important to stress this because it shows that not only democratic decisions such as parliamentary resolutions, free elections and so on legitimated the new independence. In order to avoid being labelled a nation 'without history', the new states turned to the past for justification and legitimization.<sup>3</sup> They searched for structures of continuity as grounds for the necessity to recreate their state. By seeking continuity in the past, this kind of justification was the general method of legitimization by 'history' after 1989. Thus, the longer continuities could be drawn back into the past, the more precious they appeared for the purposes of contemporary identity construction. Thus, facts of the remote past, in particular, acquired high importance in this process of legitimization. Especially important is the detection of medieval states,

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I present a research project on 'Collective identities and history in post-socialist discourses: Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine' under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Zdzisław Krasnodębski at Bremen University, a project which I started in February 2003.

<sup>2</sup> For the complexity of collective identity see Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen, 'The Construction of Collective Identity', *European Journal of Sociology*, 36, 1995: 72-102. For identity politics in the three countries see Graham Smith and others ed. *Nation-building in the Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National identities*, Cambridge 1998: esp. the chapters 'National history and national identity in Ukraine and Belarus', 23-47 and 'Nation-rebuilding and political discourses of identity politics in the Baltic states': 93-118.

<sup>3</sup> This was especially important for 'small nations' as, for instance, the Belarusians. Despite the extreme disharmony between Belarusian historians over Belarusian history it was one of the main aims of all sides to reject the accusation of being a nation without history.

kingdoms or duchies as 'predecessor states', even if this involves resorting to anachronisms.<sup>4</sup> The reason for the use especially of remote historical facts and not those of the nearer past in this process of nation-building can to a certain extent be explained in terms of how collective historical memory works. There is a fundamental difference between personal historical memory, on the one hand, and cultural historical memory, on the other.<sup>5</sup> Events in the near past, which form part of personal memory, such as the Second World War or the political changes after 1989, are part of controversial discussions. So their role for legitimation is weaker than the role of events of the medieval past, which are regarded as an integrative part of national consciousness, widely accepted as an integral part of culture and often even taught in schools. This is the reason why the present paper will concentrate primarily on an examination of facts of the remote, rather than the near, past.

### *Homogeneous nation-states, common history, different interpretations*

In the whole of Eastern Europe after 1989, the new states understood themselves as independent, self-reliant units – not only independent from the Soviet Union, but also from each other. The idea of one's own history was one of the consequences of this social consciousness. The classical form of nationalist ideology is a monistic construction: one state consists of one nation, of one ethnic unit, has one capital, one history and so on. This entails the postulate of an exclusive conception of history having the purpose of legitimating the existing nation-state by giving a rather teleological narrative of the state's ethnic unity.

But in the case of the three countries Belarus, Lithuania and Poland the situation is particular. Here, only Hitler and Stalin had created homogeneous nation-states by resettlement and relocation of the population and exterminating Jews and minorities. Before, there had always been multiethnic political units in the area. So after 1989 the realisation of an exclusive conception of history in these states was loaded with great conflict potential because of the cultural intersections and the common past of these countries. All three countries are situated on the territory of the former Republic of Both Nations. Since this was no modern national state, it is not possible to describe it as 'Polish', 'Lithuanian', 'Belarusian' or 'Ukrainian' without falling into anachronisms. But the idea of the homogeneous nation state postulated exactly this: seeking national continuities in the pre-modern period. The result was open contradiction between historians of the three countries, especially in the eastern part of the Republic of Both Nations, the so-called Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

These open contradictions are visible in the existence of various different, conflicting and incompatible narratives developing in Belarus, Lithuania and Poland, each of them using the Grand Duchy as a source of legitimation for the existing state. In all of them its capital, Vilnius, plays a fundamental and controversial role. The Grand Duchy was claimed as being Polish, since (at least after 1569) it was part of the Republic of Both Nations, often simply called Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*). It was also claimed as Lithuanian and viewed as the predecessor state of

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<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Kłoczowski and others have recently pointed out that one should not speak of the *Republic of Both Nations* simply as 'Poland', suggesting an anachronistic continuity. See Paweł Wroński, 'O Unii Lubelskiej I Unii Europejskiej. Z profesorem Jerzym Kłoczowskim rozmawia Paweł Wroński', *Magazyn Gazety Wyborczej*, 29–30 maja 1988, 22, 273: 9.

<sup>5</sup> On the distinction between personal and cultural memory see Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit / Geschichtsversessenheit. Vom Umgang mit der deutschen Vergangenheit nach 1945*, Stuttgart 1999: 35–53.

modern Lithuania.<sup>6</sup> It was finally claimed as Belarusian because of the eastern Slavonic majority of inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> It is even possible to claim it as the Ukrainian state (before the union of 1569) or to call the Eastern part of the Kingdom of Poland simply Ukraine after 1569, even when this interpretation does not play a significant role in the discussion of Ukraine nowadays. However, for Ukraine the disputes with Russia on the 'rights' on the Kievan Rus' are far more important than disputes with her Western neighbours.<sup>8</sup>

These different narratives focus on the role of Vilnius. In the Polish narrative, the town called Wilno forms an integrative part of Polish culture as a centre of Polish nineteenth century Romanticism with a poet like Adam Mickiewicz at the forefront. Called Vilnius, the town played the central role in Lithuanian historical and political thought as 'capital of Lithuania', on the basis of the historical argument that the town was founded by the Lithuanian Duke Gediminas. Belarusians view the same town, now called Vil'nia, as one of the centres of the Belarusian national movement.<sup>9</sup>

### *The idea of historical 'truth' as an obstacle for mutual understanding*

Bearing in mind the great potential for conflict that emanates from this one single example of their common past, it seems to be almost impossible that the three countries could ever come to terms with each other. Indeed, there were harsh controversies concerning this especially between certain Lithuanian and Belarusian historians. A typical Lithuanian comment on Belarusian historical ideas is the statement 'One cannot choose one's history' (*Istorijos nepasirinksi*), whereas the Belarusian 'answer' is a similar, almost equal phrase: 'History is not bound to elections' (*Historyja ne padliagajuc' halasavanniam*).<sup>10</sup> Deeply rooted in the cultural memory of every nation lies the idea, or rather feeling, of one single historical 'reality' and one real existing past, which historians only have to 'find out' and to

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<sup>6</sup> Alfredas Bumblauskas, 'Kolizje historiograficzne w kwestii charakterystyki Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego', *Lithuania*, Warszawa 1,14, 1995: 29-46. Between Polish and Lithuanian historians there were violent quarrels over the interpretation of the Latin words 'applicare' in the 1385 treaty of Krewo. Polish historians understood this as incorporation of Lithuania, by this denying Lithuanian independence as a whole, whereas their Lithuanian colleagues stressed the independence of the Grand Duchy not only after 1385, but also after 1569. Even nowadays the opinions between Polish historians are divided, but the incorporation theory has lost its leading role in Polish historical thinking. For a short overview of the historiography of Polish-Lithuanian union see Mečislovas Jučas, *Lenkijos ir Lietuvos unija (XIV a. vid. – XIX a. pr.)*, Vilnius 2000: 11-85.

<sup>7</sup> Jakub Zejmis, 'Belarusian National Historiography and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a Belarusian state', *Zeitschrift für Ost- und Ostmitteleuropaforschung*, 48, 3, 1999: 383-96.

<sup>8</sup> A good overview of Ukrainian historiography is offered by Tomasz Stryjek, 'Historiografia a konflikt o Kresy Wschodnie w latach 1939 - 1953. Radzieckie, rosyjskie, ukraińskie i polskie prezentacje dziejów ziem wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej jako część 'wojny ideologicznej' w okresie lat trzydziestych – pięćdziesiątych XX wieku', in Krzysztof Jasienica ed. *Tygiel narodów. Stosunki społeczne i etniczne na dawnych ziemiach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej 1939 – 1953*, Warszawa 2002: 429-564. See also Stephen Velychenko, *Shaping identity in Eastern Europe and Russia. Soviet-Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History 1914 – 1991*, New York 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Andrzej Garlicki, 'Wilno żądają wszyscy', in Robert Traba ed. *Tematy polsko-litewskie. Historia. Literatura. Edukacja*, Olsztyn 1999: 67-83.

<sup>10</sup> Albinas Kuncevičius, 'Istorijos nepasirinksi. Baltarusijos vėlyvųjų viduramžių archeologijos naujienos 1993 metų publikacijose', *Baltų archeologija* 8, 2, 1994: 23-24 and Anatol' Citoiū, 'Lios simvala – lios naroda', in Ė. M. Skobelev ed. *Gerb i flag belorusskoj derzhavy*, Minsk 1997: 10. In his own words, the Lithuanian historian intended to reject Belarusian aspirations to the Lithuanian past, whereas his Belarusian colleague in these very words intended to defend the Belarusian character of these very facts against other positions.

‘demonstrate’.<sup>11</sup> Processes of commemoration aim at strengthening these feelings in a ritualised manner in the form of holidays, commemoration days, monuments and so on.<sup>12</sup> A nationalist, teleological interpretation of this feeling is the notion of historical ‘rights’ or historical ‘missions’ a nation must fulfil.

It is these very ideas of historical ‘truth’, historical ‘missions’ and historical ‘rights’ that make understanding so difficult. The idea of historical ‘truth’ augmented dramatically in the last years of the socialist system. Oppositional movements stressed the idea of the one and unique historical ‘truth’ making a sharp distinction between communist ‘lies’ and their own historical ‘truth’.<sup>13</sup> This led to an enforced history within society, totally obscuring the fact that no change from ‘lie’ to ‘truth had taken place’, but only a change from one system of interpretation to another. The historiography of the anti-communist opposition, too, was, however, guided by interests.<sup>14</sup>

But already a few years after the end of the communist system, the simple distinction between ‘lies’ and ‘truth’ became increasingly obsolete. Under the Soviet regime, one single, unified narrative of history in the form of a canon, serving as state ideology had dominated, even if (as, for instance, in Poland) already at the end of the ‘70s this domination came to be questioned. After 1989, a quick diversification took place. The result was a pluralism of cultures of memory and the development of different and contradictory *lieux de mémoire*, leading to a landscape of conflicting memories. For example, the forced common consensus on Soviet foundation myths (e.g. victory in Second World War) no longer existed. The Jedwabne discussion in Poland destroyed old common myths and helped to start a contrastive, pluralistic discussion on the past.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, pluralism in society gave rise to pluralism of conceptions of history and narratives. Thus, after 1989, it is not possible to speak simply of ‘the Polish narrative’, for instance. The best example is Belarus, where at least two contrastive conceptions of history developed in opposition to each other, each of them trying to

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<sup>11</sup> See Henryk Samsonowicz, *O ‘historii prawdziwej’. Mity, legendy i podania jako źródło historyczne*, Gdańsk 1997 esp. the chapter ‘Co to jest mit?’: 6-26. For a methodological approach to the problem of ‘truth’ see Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit. Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie*, Köln 1997 especially the chapter ‘Tatsache, Interpretation und Wahrheit’: 35-64.

<sup>12</sup> A good overview on the situation of various European countries is to be found in Emil Brex and Hannes Stekl, *Der Kampf um das Gedächtnis*, Wien 1997. See for the Polish case the articles of Stanisław Grodziski, ‘Nationalfeiertage und öffentliche Gedenktage Polens im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert’: 205-16 and Czesław Brzoza, ‘Aus der Geschichte des 3. Mai-Gedenktages in Polen’: 217-30.

<sup>13</sup> This was especially stressed in the Soviet Union opposite groups. See e.g. Robert W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London 1989 and Gert Meyer ed. *Wir brauchen die Wahrheit. Geschichtsdiskussion in der Sowjetunion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Köln 1989.

<sup>14</sup> This is not to deny the necessity of detecting socialist ‘foundation lies’ as Kurapaty or others of moral importance. See e.g. David R. Marples, ‘Kurapaty. The Investigation of Stalinist Historical Controversy’, *Slavic Review*, 53, 1994: 513-23.

<sup>15</sup> See Paweł Machcewicz, ‘Przeszłość jako wyzwanie’ in Paweł Machcewicz and others ed. *Wokół Jedwabnego*, 2 vols, Warszawa 2002, 1, 14-7. On the diversification of memory cultures in Lithuania see Alfredas Bumblauskas and others ed. *Lietuvos sovietinė istoriografija. Teoriniai ir ideologiniai kontekstai*, Vilnius 2001; Rüdiger Ritter, ‘Prescribed identity. The Role of History for the Legitimation of Soviet Rule in Lithuania’, in Olaf Mertelsmann ed. *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940 – 1956*, Tartu 2003: 85-11; in Belarus Rainer Lindner, *Historiker und Herrschaft. Nationsbildung und Geschichtspolitik in Weißrußland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, München 1999, chapter ‘Nationsbildung und Geschichtspolitik in spät- und postsowjetischer Zeit’, 367-478.

claim historical 'truth' for itself.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the situation after the end of the Socialist system grew even more complicated. In the new countries, various different and contradictory narratives evolved, replacing the forced agreement of an official Socialist/Soviet narrative.

### *Different types of understanding the nation*

The challenge was thus the same for all three countries. In order to come to terms with each other, their individual 'truth' had to be modified in a certain way. But the ability to do so was not equal in all these countries. As the following analysis will show, the ability depends on the ruling idea of nation and of the structure of national narratives in each of the given countries. There are great differences in both points between the three countries: firstly, there is a different type of understanding of 'nation' between Poland, Lithuania and Belarus and, secondly, there is a characteristic structure of intersection of Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian foundation myths.

The idea of nation forms the centre of the historical narratives of all three countries. But what is meant by nation in these countries is far from being the same. Additionally, there is a pluralism of concepts of nation in each one of these countries. In Polish thinking two main streams exist: there is the ethnical, 'modern' concept and the historical, 'federalistic' one, both symbolised by Roman Dmowski's idea of Piast's Poland and, on the other side, Józef Piłsudski's idea of a Jagiellonian Poland.<sup>17</sup> Poland's Western shift after 1945 led to a concentration on an ethnic-based understanding of nation, but the idea of a Polish historical, cultural nation still exists to this day.

The Lithuanian idea of nation seems to be purely ethnical at the first glance.<sup>18</sup> But there is an historical element in the Lithuanian concept of nation also, which is visible in the claim for Vilnius at the beginning of nineteenth century. The Lithuanian claim rested in fact on historical reasons, being justified by the character of Vilnius as the capital of medieval 'Lithuania'. But even this claim for Vilnius is based on what one could call a historical ethnic idea of the Lithuanian nation: there is the Lithuanian conception of an ethnic Lithuanian medieval state with a then Lithuanian-inhabited capital of Vilnius, which lost its Lithuanian character only because of processes of polonisation and belorusification.<sup>19</sup> So, finally, the claim for Vilnius is based on an ethnic idea of nation, too. In fact, there is no real historical idea of nation in Lithuanian thinking today: The modern Lithuanian national movement did (and does) not claim the whole territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the future Lithuanian state, but only its small Western part, the so-called '*Lithuania propria*'.

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<sup>16</sup> Anna Brzozowska, 'Symbols, Myths, and Metaphors. The Discursive Battle over the 'True' Belarusian Narrative', *Slovo*, 15, 1, 2003: 49-58; Henadz Sahanovich, 'The War against Belarusian history', *Education in Russia, the Independent States and Eastern Europe*, 20, 1, 2002: 18-27.

<sup>17</sup> See the essay of Andrzej Walicki, *Trzy patriotyzmy. Trzy tradycje polskiego patriotyzmu i ich znaczenie współczesne*, Warszawa 1991.

<sup>18</sup> For Lithuanian idea of nation see Abba S. Stražas, 'From Auszra to the Great War: The Emergence of the Lithuanian nation', *Lituanus* 42, 4, 1996: 34-73. Old, but useful is Manfred Hellmann, 'Die litauische Nationalbewegung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 2, 1953: 66-106. See also V. Stanley Vardys and Judith Sedaitis, *Lithuania. The Rebel Nation*, Boulder 1997 chapter 'At the European crossroads: Lithuania's Historical roots', 1-27.

<sup>19</sup> Across the centuries the Lithuanian language almost disappeared because there was no written tradition, but the consciousness of being 'Lithuanian' remained, even if it was expressed in Polish. See Zigmantas Zinkevičius, *The History of the Lithuanian Language*, Vilnius 1998: 263.



The Belarusian understanding of nation contains important ethnic elements, too.<sup>20</sup> The idea of an old Belarusian nation with its own language helped consolidate the idea of an independent Belarusian (and Belarusian-speaking) intelligentsia between both Poland and Russia. The 'Lithuanian statutes' of sixteenth century written in a language considered as predecessor of Belarusian are held as evidence of this. The idea behind it is that three eastern Slav tribes (Krivichy, Dregovichy, Radimichy) represent the starting point of Belarusian ethnogenesis. But there are also many arguments regarding the existence of a non-ethnic concept of nation based on the idea of a Belarusian territory.<sup>21</sup> This is especially to be seen in the field of culture, which promotes the notion of a 'whole-Belarusian process' dating back to the Middle Ages, which includes ethnic non-Belarusian people.<sup>22</sup> This idea allows the integration of noblemen in Belarusian history, ordinarily simply known as 'Polish' or 'Lithuanian' such as Radziwiłł or Ogiński.<sup>23</sup> Underlying this seems to be the concept of a Belarusian territory, seen as constant ever since the Middle Ages.<sup>24</sup> Significant for this 'territorial' thinking is the outstanding position of the borderlines of the Belarusian state in the coat of arms from 1995.

Summing up briefly, it is worth noting that in all three countries there is an ethnic idea of nation in connection with others, among which the historical idea of nation seems to be of special importance. Since the general development after 1989 not only in the three countries, but in the whole of Eastern Europe, went in the direction of ethnically-based nation states, it seems obvious that Poland and then Lithuania with their mainly ethnically-based conception of nation had better possibilities for their nation-building than Belarus with its different conception based also on territorial arguments. The specific problem of the Belarusian case is already visible at this point: the intention to draw their 'own' narrative by exploring non-ethnic Belarusian elements leads to an 'exclusion by inclusion'. Claiming all events on the territory of today's Belarus as 'its own' is hardly tolerable for neighbours having mostly ethnic-based ideas of nation.<sup>25</sup>

### *Intersection of foundation myths decides the structure of the narrative*

The second difference between the three countries' historical position lies in the structure of possible national narratives. An analysis of national narratives of history demonstrates their construction as a sort of chain of foundation myths,<sup>26</sup> which in

<sup>20</sup> See for the following Lindner, *Historiker*, chapter 'Nationales Selbstverständnis und 'weißrussische Mission': 459-67.

<sup>21</sup> As Timothy Snyder puts it, Belarusians formed the biggest ethnic unit, but nevertheless formed no nation. See Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569 – 1999*, New Haven, 2003: 281

<sup>22</sup> This idea is stressed not only in political discourse, but also in the field of culture. In the introduction to his history of Belarusian music, V. Skorabagataŭ speaks of an 'all-Belarusian process', thus showing a non-ethnic-based idea of Belarusianness. See Viktor Skorabagataŭ, *Zaigrali spadchynnia kuranty. Cykl narysaŭ z historyi prafesiinai muzychnai kultury Belarusi*, Minsk, 1998: 13.

<sup>23</sup> For a Belarusian interpretation of the Radziwiłł family see Irina Maslenicyna and Nikolaj Bogodziazh, *Radzivilly – Nesvizhskie koroli (istoricheskie miniatiury)*, Minsk 1997.

<sup>24</sup> In the work of Georgii Vasil'evich Shtychaŭ, *Starazhytnyja dzjarzhavy na terytoryi Belarusi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Minsk, 2002, the title already suggests the existence of Belarus in ancient times.

<sup>25</sup> One can see here at work elements of a premodern understanding of nation, as Timothy Snyder puts it: Snyder, *Reconstruction*: 281.

<sup>26</sup> A 'foundation myth' in the sense used here means a fact or event of the past playing a decisive role in the formation of a certain narrative, thus being a crucial stone in the building of collective identity. In this way a 'narrative' can be understood as a composition of the basic foundation myths. See

their sum explain the character of the now existing nation. It seems obvious that there are two basic kinds of foundation myths. Myths of the first kind serve as legitimation only for one single nation, those of the second kind can be used by various nations.

In the national narratives of the three countries, there are foundation myths of both groups. One example for the first kind is the kingdom of the Polish Piast dynasty - a Polish central foundation myth, but without significance for her eastern neighbours, so there are no disputes at all about this subject.<sup>27</sup> One example of the second kind is the Republic of Both Nations, especially its eastern part, the Grand Duchy, forming an important foundation myth for Lithuanians and Belarusians as well, additionally being an important element of Polish and Ukrainian narratives of history. These one could call 'intersected myths' because of their multifunctional character, important for identity constructions of two or more nations.<sup>28</sup>

Such 'intersected' myths make possible a classification of narratives into two: those with a high percentage of 'undisputed' foundation myths (i.e. having a function for one single nation only), and those with a higher number of 'intersected' myths. This classification is important, because the structure of the narrative essentially determines the problems encountered by one nation in forming her identity by constructing a concise and consistent story of its own historical development. The *a priori* existence of many intersected foundation myths in a given narrative complicates the process of self-definition and forces one to justify one's use of historical events to the neighbours.

So the quota of intersected foundation myths in the narrative of one nation determines the possibilities of writing a 'purely individual' history, a history of one's own, without getting into conflict with one's neighbours. The more 'intersected' foundation myths occur, the more problems occur as a consequence of constructing an 'exclusive' narrative. If a nation can dispose of many individual, undisputed foundation myths, the construction of a narrative and thus of national collective identity is much easier. Moreover, there is a connection between concise narrative and identity: the more individual foundation myths exist, the stronger one's own identity construction.

### *The 'intersection area': Geography and the structures of narratives*

In most cases, foundation myths are linked up with concrete issues, that is, with historical figures, historical events or historical landscapes. It is interesting that very often foundation myths are bound to a certain territory. Looking at where the three countries get their foundation myths from nowadays, there is a distinction between 'individual' areas and 'intersected' ones (e.g. for the Polish case the difference between the towns of Kraków and Wilno). There is a certain 'intersection area', which

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Samsonowicz, O 'historii prawdziwej', chapters 'Mity 'Początku'' and 'Polskie mity Początku': 27-40 and 59-70.

<sup>27</sup> See Marek Cetwiński, 'Kazimierz Odnowiciel: Mit wiecznego powrotu w dziejopisarstwie polskim', *Biuletyn Instytut Filozoficzny – Historyczny WSP w Częstochowie*, 17, 6, 1999: 3-7; Jerzy Topolski, 'Historiographische Mythen. Eine methodologische Einführung' in Adelheid von Saldern ed. *Mythen in Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung aus polnischer und deutscher Sicht*, Münster 1996: 27-35.

<sup>28</sup> There are also examples of historical events which are interpreted in a different manner by neighbours, but which do not play a central role in their historical consciousness. One example is the Chmielnicki-uprising of 1648 – a Ukrainian foundation myth, but interpreted on the Polish side only as riot without further importance for the formation of Polish identity. See Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, Seattle 1995: chapter 'The Polish Historical Viewpoint', esp. 17 and 'The Ukrainian Historical Viewpoint', esp. 19.

one could locate approximately between Vilnius and Minsk, to which the foundation myths of all three countries are bound.

To understand Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian problems of history and of mutual relations in the right way, it is important to consider the character of the region between Vilnius and Minsk. It is one of the typical East European border regions, where various national narratives and interests stand in sharp contrast between each other and can hardly be solved because of the very complicated ethnic structure at the micro-level. The number of these border regions in Eastern Europe is mainly due to the ethnic mix in many parts of Eastern Europe. But the specific nature of the region between Vilnius and Minsk has to do with the fact that there are neither 'natural borders' in this region nor a historical name.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike other border regions like Galicia, Bukowina or Transylvania, the region between Vilnius and Minsk never formed an independent political unit, but nevertheless has got a specific quality. It is the region where, since medieval times, East Slav and Baltic tribes lived together. In the Middle Ages, the area of Baltic settlement reached at least as far as Minsk, so it is not enough to speak only of the Vilnius region as an intersection area.<sup>30</sup> The Polish element, which was present in the region since late Middle Ages, led to the notion of North-Western *kresy* - the only kind of denomination existing for this territory. But there are two problems with this name: firstly, it is a Polish notion only and evokes the idea of Polish domination in this area: *kresy* means borderlands, so people living in this area are mentally mapped to be at the eastern borders of a centre being Poland. For obvious reasons, this conception is not acceptable neither for Lithuanians, nor for Belarusians nor Ukrainians. Secondly, the notion of *kresy* does not distinguish between areas with ethnic Lithuanian, Belarusian or Ukrainian population, thus postulating a uniformity, which in fact did not exist.<sup>31</sup>

The present-day states of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland share this area, but it is important to point out in what sense. Following its Western shift, present-day Poland contains hardly any part of what one could call the 'intersection area'. But also in former times, there was a Polish state with a considerably extensive area called 'Polish': the Polish Kingdom that endured up to 1795 as the Western part of the Republic of Both Nations. This meant that the heritage of the past one can rely on to form a 'Polish' historical narrative contains a considerable number of 'undisputed' foundation myths, historical events as well as towns or regions such as Kraków, the regions Wielkopolska and Małopolska and others. So especially in Poland it is possible to build a historical narrative without using the intersected Eastern myths and based on an huge number of foundation myths undoubtedly 'Polish' dating back to the Middle Ages such as the Piast dynasty or King Kazimierz Wielki. This 'ethnic' Polish history can serve as social glue, moderating identity losses concerning the Eastern

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<sup>29</sup> See Ralph Schattkowsky, 'Das Land zwischen Ost und West. Regionalität und Herrschaft im östlichen Mitteleuropa', in Mieczysław Wojciechowski and Ralph Schattkowsky (ed.), *Historische Grenzlandschaften Ostmitteleuropas im 16. und 20. Jh. Gesellschaft – Wirtschaft – Politik*, Toruń 1996: 7-24; Stefan Troebst, 'What's in a Historical Region? A Teutonic Perspective', *European Review of History*, 10, 2003: 173-88.

<sup>30</sup> See Zigmantas Zinkevičius, 'Pietryčių Lietuva nuo seniausią laikų iki mūsų dienų' and Valerijus Čekmonas and Laima Grumadienė, 'Kalbų paplitimas rytų Lietuvoje', both in K. Garšva and Laima Grumadienė (ed.), *Lietuvos rytai. Straipsnių rinkinys*, Vilnius 1993: 42-100 and 132-6.

<sup>31</sup> On the term *kresy* see Hanna Dylągowa, 'Kresy – pojęcie historyczne i emocjonalne', *Więź*, 9, 1999: 95-101 and Stefan Kieniewicz, 'Kresy. Przemiany terminologiczne w perspektywie dziejowej', *Przegląd Wschodni*, 1, 1, 1991: 3-13.

region.<sup>32</sup> What causes problems in the Polish narrative is the idea of former Polish Eastern cultural domination.

Nowadays Lithuania contains Vilnius and the Vilnius region: an important part of the mentioned 'intersection area'. So the problem of intersected foundation myths is much more important and it is not possible for Lithuanian historians to create an undisputed 'Lithuanian character' of this region. But Lithuania like Poland consists additionally of a region with undisputed 'Lithuanian' character: the region of Samogitia, which had constituted during several times in history a nucleus of Lithuanian national self-assertion. This fact has recently led to a strong regionalistic Samogitian self-awareness and a conception of history predicated on the assumption of being the 'real' Lithuania.<sup>33</sup>

Belarus is in the most unfavourable position, being wholly situated in the mentioned 'intersection area'. There is no Belarusian region fulfilling a similar role as the Kingdom of Poland or Samogitia.<sup>34</sup> Between Lithuania and Belarus, there is a second point, making the situation of Belarus even more unfavourable. Given the similarity of the Belarusian language to both Polish and Russian, Belarusian culture did not have an equally undisputed criterion for self-definition and segregation as had the Lithuanians with their non-Slavic and therefore very different language.<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note that the acceleration of Lithuanian national movement started with the public use of the Lithuanian language. To this day the Lithuanian language has had a high mythical value in Lithuanian culture.<sup>36</sup> One can detect here a reason for, on the one hand, the fast success of the Lithuanian national movement and, on the other, the weakness of the Belarusian case. The Belarusian language was treated either as a Polish or as a Russian dialect and thus could not fulfil a similar function. So the postulate of a Belarusian distinct identity was not believed *a priori* by its neighbours, but had to be demonstrated again and again.

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<sup>32</sup> Wojciech Wrzesiński ed. *Polskie mity polityczne XIX i XX wieku*, 2 vols, Wrocław, 1994 - 1996 gives an overview over crucial Polish myths. The myth of Polish East (Daniel Beauvois, 'Mit Kresów Wschodnich' czyli jak mu położyć kres', in Wrzesiński, *Polskie mity*, vol. 1, 93-106) is here only one myth among others.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Adomas Butrimas and others, *Žemaitijos istorija*, Vilnius 1997, esp. the chapter by Egidijus Aleksandravičius 'Žemaičių kultūrinis sąjūdis Lietuvos atgimimo istorijoje': 270-94.

<sup>34</sup> However, an important direction in Belarusian historiography uses the medieval duchy of Polack as undisputed foundation myth. See Lindner, *Historiker*: 81-4.

<sup>35</sup> The problem is not the youth of the Belarusian language, because there is a vivid literal tradition not only during the reformation, but also in the Middle Ages, when the so-called 'Old-Belarusian' was the official written language of the Grand Duchy. In this function, the Belarusian language is one of the few non-intersected foundation myths of present-day Belarus. But this myth is relatively weak because of the similar character of Belarusian in comparison to Polish and Russian. See Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 41. Many Polish and Russian speakers still do not accept the character of Belarusian as an individual language, considering it a mere dialect and calling it and its mixed forms 'the simple language' (język 'po prostu'). See Čekmonas, 'Kalbų paplitimas': 133. In present-day Belarus there exists a complicated structure of language mixture of Belarusian and Russian. See Nacional'naja Akademija Nauk Belarusi. Instytut jazykoznanija imeni Jakuba Kolasa ed. *Tipologija dvujazyčija i mnogojazyčija v Belarusi*, Minsk 1999: 112-242.

<sup>36</sup> For the Lithuanian idea of nation see Vytautas Berenis, 'Modernėjančių mentalitetų gimimas', in Berenis and others ed. *Lietuvių mentalitetai: tautinė istorija ir kultūros problemos*, Vilnius 2002: 190-220. The importance of language for the Lithuanian national idea being characteristic for all Baltic countries is stressed by Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States. Years of Dependence, 1940 - 1980*, London 1983: 167.

## Strategy

There are two main strategies of coping with the past and writing history. From a maximalistic, exclusive position, writing history not only serves as a means of self-definition, but also acquires a strictly exclusive character by creating a history of 'one's own' and ignoring the needs and interpretations of one's neighbours. The opposite view offers an inclusive version of historiography, which understands the idea of historiography as a common task, as the consequence of a common past. Accepting inclusive elements in one's own narrative makes for better mutual understanding, but also presupposes the giving up of several elements of the exclusive conception. In particular the mentioned idea of historical 'truth', common and widespread in non-scientific circles of society, had to be seriously modified for these purposes. In the process of designing their identity and their mutual relations, the main task of the three states after 1989 was to find solutions in this field.

### *Poland – Lithuania: 'getting rid' of history?*

In his study, Timothy Snyder shows that after 1989 an important step of Polish Eastern policy was the rupture with the old traditional Polish understanding of these areas. The Polish idea of a cultural nation postulated a Polish cultural mission into the East, which viewed in a certain sense present-day Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine as part of Poland. The rupture implemented by foreign minister Skubiszewski and prepared by Jerzy Giedroyc and Jerzy Mierosławski in the Polish emigration journal *Kultura* consisted of two main elements. The first was the decision to treat the Eastern neighbours as states with equal rights and not to see them through the lens of one's own narrative. The second element was to place the state interests of the present-day Polish republic higher above any contentious historical debates.<sup>37</sup>

This strategy succeeded in many respects. By 'leaving history to the historians' and preventing its exploitation in actual politics, not only a normalisation of mutual relations with neighbours was possible, but also a harmonisation of historical narratives. In the case of Lithuania and Ukraine, this strategy worked well: Poland and Ukraine succeeded in coming to terms on a most contentious part of their mutual history, when both countries founded a bilateral commission with the aim of elucidating the mutual massacres of the 1940s and the post-war resettlement of Ukrainians by communist Poland, the so-called *akcja Wisła*.<sup>38</sup>

Poland and Lithuania divided between themselves the historical heritage of the Republic of Both Nations and Grand Duchy: Poland came to regard itself as a successor of the Western, while Lithuania views itself as successor of the Eastern part.<sup>39</sup> When the majority of Polish historians spoke no longer of an annexation or incorporation of 'Lithuania' into 'Poland' in 1385, they accepted by this the Lithuanian construction of succession, the Lithuanian historical 'rights' on the Grand

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<sup>37</sup> Snyder, *Reconstruction*: 218-20. See also Romuald Wernik, *O realną politykę wschodnią. Kilka uwag o polskiej polityce wschodniej i mniejszościowej*, Wrocław 1999.

<sup>38</sup> After the government formally apologized for this, a common historical commission was set up with the aim of investigating the *akcja Wisła*. See Grzegorz Motyka, 'Problematyka stosunków polsko-ukraińskich w latach 1939 – 1948 w polskiej historiografii po roku 1989', in Piotr Kosiewski and Grzegorz Motyka ed. *Historycy Polscy i ukraińscy wobec problemów XX wieku*, Kraków 2000: 166-78; Włodzimierz Bonusiak ed. *Polska i Ukraina w podręcznikach szkolnych i akademickich. Materiały z konferencji naukowej nt. podręczników szkolnych i akademickich w Polsce i na Ukrainie, odbytej 18-19 września 2000 r. w Wyższej Szkole Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie*, Rzeszów 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 251.

Duchy. In addition, both partners created a common version of the Vilnius/Wilno history, downplaying any remaining controversies.

The reason for these common activities of Poland and Lithuania can be detected in their common state interests: both states strongly pursued membership in the European Union. This meant the necessity to solve neighbour and minority problems as a precondition of entrance. Especially for the Lithuanian *raison d'état* the notion was crucial that orientation to the West and membership of Western institutions (strongly desired because of a fear of Russian aspirations) was possible only with the help and in communication with the pre-war enemy Poland. As a result, an idea of a 'strategic partnership' of the two countries evolved.<sup>40</sup>

But there was also a price to be paid for the Polish-Lithuanian agreement. Creating a common, harmonised version of history automatically means 1) a break with one's own traditions and 2) accepting the historical constructions of the other partner. Poland did the former by giving up her historical 'rights' on Vilnius. This meant a sharp rupture with traditions rooted in Polish cultural thought.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, this also meant Polish acceptance of Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania and an acceptance of the Lithuanian construction of history – especially of the two main problems of Lithuanian history construction.

Firstly, there was a contradiction between the Lithuanian view of the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940 as an aggression (which is what it actually was) and the fact that Stalin himself had given Vilnius to this country. From a logical point of view, condemning the aggression would also mean condemning the 'return' of Vilnius. The reason for the rejection of this contradiction lies in the second contradiction of Lithuanian history that Poland had to accept: before 1940, Vilnius was anything but an ethnic Lithuanian city. Even the most optimistic statistics could count no more than 2% Lithuanians, whereas the Poles came to 30% (the most numerous ethnic group in the city were the Jews with 40%). What made Vilnius the ethnically Lithuanian city that it is today was Soviet resettlement politics. If one were to use the ethnic criterion, Lithuanians should have given Vilnius back to Poland after the Second World War. But instead of insisting on arguments like this, on the Polish side efforts were made to accept the Lithuanian positions, for the first time in history perceiving Lithuania as an equal political partner.<sup>42</sup>

Lithuania on the other hand, accepted Polish problems. This shows the 'new' Lithuanian reaction to the 'old' Polish ideas of cultural mission, which remained vivid, because they are so deeply rooted in cultural memory, which cannot be blotted out overnight by political decisions. If Polish official politics accepted the

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<sup>40</sup> See for the Lithuanian search for security Peter van Ham, 'The Baltic States and Europe: The Quest for security', in Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin, *The Baltic states in world politics*, Richmond 1998: 24-45; for Polish fulfilment of conditions for EU-entrance see Wanda Dugiel, 'Warunki członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej i ich spełnianie przez Polskę', in Elżbieta Kawecka-Wyrzykowska (ed.), *Stosunki Polski z Unią Europejską*, Warszawa 2002: 95-116; for 'strategical partnership' and Lithuanian-Polish relations see Jerzy Marek Nowakowski, 'Trudne partnerstwo strategiczne' and Povilas Gylys, 'Najnowsza historia rozwoju stosunków polsko-litewskich', both in Stanisław Miklaszewski ed. *Polska polityka wschodnia*, Kraków 2000: 31-40 and 57-62; Raimundas Lopata, 'Lietuvos ir Lenkijos valstybinių santykių raida nuo 1990 m.', *Šiaurės Atėnai*, 17. X. 1998, 37, 431.

<sup>41</sup> In 1999, the vice-president of the Polish parliament Jan Król expressed the opinion that one should not overestimate Polish-Lithuanian minority questions, thus showing the intention to set more stock by Polish-Lithuanian relations as a whole than by 'old' minority 'rights'. See Jan Król, 'Współpraca polska-litewska', in Miklaszewski, *Polska polityka*, 25-6.

<sup>42</sup> Two examples: Janusz Dunin-Horkawicz, 'Jak szanować Litwę? Nurty wileńskiego myślenia', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 128, 1999: 82-8; Bogdan Szlachta, 'Zrozumieć rację Litwinów', *Więź*, 8 1992: 22-31.

Lithuanianness of Vilnius and its culture, the idea of cultural heritage has endured to this day.<sup>43</sup> Thus present-day Polish schoolchildren still learn by heart the famous beginning of Mickiewicz's poem *Pan Tadeusz* 'Lithuania, my fatherland'. For Polish cultural thinking the idea of a Polish cultural heritage and of a Polishness of Vilnius and of Mickiewicz is crucial. It is so strongly embedded in the minds of the Polish population, that its rejection on the basis of rational, state-interest-led reasons is simply impossible.

With this harmonised version of history, it is possible nowadays for Lithuanians to accept the Polish position. Since it was no more absolutely necessary to postulate the Lithuanianness of Vilnius Romantic poets, it was much easier to accept Polish ideas of Polish cultural heritage on Lithuanian territory. The switch can be seen in the following two examples. At the beginning of the Lithuanian national movement with the journal *Aušra* in 1882, Jonas Basanavičius claimed for the purposes of national self-definition the whole past of the region as Lithuanian, speaking of Mickiewicz, Kondratowicz, Moniuszko and all Vilnius Romantics as Lithuanians.<sup>44</sup> Nowadays, not only the common Polish-Lithuanian background of Mickiewicz is stressed,<sup>45</sup> but also his 'European' character.<sup>46</sup> This shows once more how intensively the leading idea of Europe structures historical Lithuanian thinking.<sup>47</sup>

It was this orientation towards actual state interests that led Lithuanian political leaders to an acceptance of Polish positions at a further crucial point. Since the emergence of an independent Lithuania after 1989 the strong postulate of an official excuse by Poland for the occupation of Vilnius by General Żeligowski in 1920 limited the possibilities of a Polish-Lithuanian agreement. Thus, the Lithuanians wanted Poles not only to accept the Lithuanian historical narrative, but also demanded an excuse from a state which was not responsible for the action.<sup>48</sup> In 1993, Landsbergis for the first time spoke of the possibility of an agreement with Poland without a Polish excuse for Żeligowski. This and the final ratification of the Polish-Lithuanian treaty one year later marked an important turning point. In placing state interests above historical 'right', Lithuania accepted the Polish position and thus desisted from demanding that Poland should accept the Lithuanian historical narrative as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For the idea of Polish culture in the East see Grzegorz Kotlarski and Marek Figura (ed.), *Oblicza wschodu w kulturze polskiej*, Poznań 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Jerzy Ochmański, *Litewski ruch narodowo-kulturalny w XIX wieku (do 1890 r.)*, Białystok 1965: 179-90.

<sup>45</sup> In his article on the film by Polish director Andrzej Wajda 'Pan Tadeusz', based on the poem by Adam Mickiewicz, Marius Ivaškevič called Mickiewicz a 'bridge' between Poland and Lithuania. See Marius Ivaškevič, 'Kodėl aš ne lenkas? Mintys, šovusios į galvą žiūrint "Poną Tada"', *Kultūros barai*, 4, 2000: 40.

<sup>46</sup> See Egidijus Aleksandravičius (ed.), *Mickevičiaus Lietuva. Adomo Mickevičiaus 200-osioms gimimo metinėms*, Kaunas 1999 and Aušra Jurgutienė (ed.), *Lietuvos kultūra: romantizmo variantai: mokslinės konferencijos, skirtos Adomo Mickevičiaus 200-osioms gimimo metinėms ir įvykusios 1998 gruodžio dieną, medžiaga*, Vilnius 2001.

<sup>47</sup> In the years before joining the EU, the problem of the European Character of Lithuanian culture was broadly discussed. Historians pointed out the individuality of Lithuanian culture in a European context dating to the Middle Ages. See Darius Staliūnas ed. *Europos idėja Lietuvoje: istorija ir dabartis*, Vilnius 2002; Alfredas Bumblauskas and Rimvydas Petrauskas (ed.), *Lietuvos europėjimo keliais: istorinės studijos*, Vilnius 2002; I. Vinogradnaitė, 'The Construction of National and European Identity in Lithuania', in P. Drulák ed. *National and European identities in EU enlargement. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*, Praha 2001: 95 – 112.

<sup>48</sup> Poland could not accept this postulate as this would lead to further revanchist postulates from other countries. Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 254.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 272 f.

The Polish-Lithuanian conflict now became part of an old, finished history (therefore historicised) and was described as such in the Lithuanian media.<sup>50</sup>

In this way, Poland and Lithuania managed not only to organise the past by dividing historical heritage, but also to cope with the ideas of historical ‘truths’ existing in both societies. This was perhaps the most important achievement of the whole process. Poland and Lithuania managed to combine the harmonised narratives of history with the historical ‘feelings’ dominating their respective societies. This was of crucial importance for the survival of the narrative. If history or a historiographic description only claims to be a rational construction ‘from above’ and differs too much from these feelings, it runs the risk of losing social acceptance or even of being labelled as ‘false’. For purposes of identity construction, it becomes worthless because it cannot play the role of ‘social glue’.

For Polish society, the problem was harder than it was for the Lithuanians. To this day it has been a delicate task to accept and to marginalise *kresy*-Romanticism in Polish society.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to this, Lithuanians are in quite a good position, because their historical narrative won over. No longer forced to stress the problems of this narrative, they can use its integrative potential. Here lies an important reason for the intensity of mobilisation and restructuration of the Lithuanian society. At the official level, Lithuania nowadays presents itself as a Europe-orientated, modern nation-state with fair-play politics on minority questions.<sup>52</sup> In this way, the orientation towards Europe and the European Union helped modify and render more malleable the historical ‘truth’ in both countries and offered an *Ersatz* and an additional orientation, which complemented and thus diminished ‘old’ ideas of historical ‘truth’.

*Polish-Lithuanian harmony causes troubles with Belarus: The Licvin-theory of Ermalovič and the reaction of Gudavičius*

The ‘losers’ in this Polish-Lithuanian agreement are the Belarusians. For them, the common past with their neighbours turned out to be a malediction rather than a chance. A similar partition of historical heritage to that between Poland and Lithuania is not possible, because there was never either a historical ‘Lithuanian’ or a ‘Belarusian’ unit, dividing the Grand Duchy in two parts<sup>53</sup> which could have been used as Lithuanian and Belarusian by predecessor states. This means that the development of two exclusive, but harmonised narratives was not possible either.

So harmonising the narratives between Poland and Lithuania automatically means excluding Belarus – a problem all Belarusian national narratives have to cope with.

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<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Bronys Savukynas, ‘Su kaimynais kaimyniškai, arba pokalbiai apie senuosius stereotipus’, *Kultūros barai*, 8, 9, 1997: 2. Saulius Drazdauskas speaks even of the ‘end of history’ of both countries. Saulius Drazdauskas, ‘Lenkų sindromo pabaiga? Kelios pastabos su istoriniu kontekstu’, *Naujasis Židinys – Aidai*, 10, 2001: 521-24, (521).

<sup>51</sup> In his analysis of the Polish political system, Zdzisław Krasnodębski describes the unwillingness of Polish liberals to deal with the past at all: Zdzisław Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii*, Gdańsk 2003: 229-39. The strategy of getting rid of history may be a consequence of this attitude towards the past.

<sup>52</sup> Saulius Kubrys, *National Minorities in Lithuania. An Outline*, trans. by Milda Dyke, Vilnius 2002. For an official point of view see Tautinių mažumų ir išeivijos departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės (ed.), *Tautinių mažumų švietimas Lietuvoje: teoriniai ir praktiniai aspektai. Konferencijos medžiaga 2000 m. gruodžio mėn. 19 – 20. d.*, Vilnius 2001.

<sup>53</sup> A somewhat similar situation exists between Poles and Ukrainians. The Grand Duchy contained before 1569 important parts of regions with Ukrainian settlers. These regions went after the Lublin Union to Korona Polska. So there is a historical border separating present-day Belarus and Ukraine, but not Ukraine and Poland. But this is of no further importance for today, because Korona Polska and the Grand Duchy do not play a central role as they do in Ukrainian foundation myths.



Bearing in mind the fact that present-day Belarus and Lithuania both contain parts of the mentioned intersection area, but not of present-day Poland, it becomes obvious that there appeared disputes especially between Belarus and Lithuania over history and not so much between Belarus and Poland. In Belarus there exists at least one strong narrative, which describes Belarus as a successor to the Grand Duchy. This posed a particular problem to Lithuanians, who rejected this part of the Belarusian conception as a whole.

These problems occurred very early when a new historiography was coming into being, seeking for alternative terms beyond the Soviet paradigm. In 1989, Mikola Ermalovich published his ideas on Belarusian origin,<sup>54</sup> which later on he worked out in detail. According to him, the historical right on the designation 'Lithuania' does not belong to Lithuanians, but to Belarusians. His argumentation works as follows:

In the same way that there existed under the Baltic term of "Prusiia" a strong German state, there hid under the Baltic term of "Litva" a strong East-Slav state. In the same way that the Eastern Germans were called "Prusaki", who should not be confused with Prussians ["Prusy"], so Belarusians of the Nemen area [*paniamonskia belarusy*] were called 'litviny', who should not be confused with "litoŭcy". The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a poly-ethnic state, but judging by the history of its foundation on the territory of Belarus, which was its nucleus, and by the domination of Belarusian culture and language it was first of all a Belarusian state.<sup>55</sup>

Without further research it is not possible to discuss these statements, but that is not the task of the present article. Ermalovich's statements form an important part of the Belarusian way of coping with the past. Even if Ermalovich holds an extreme position, which is not shared by all Belarusian colleagues,<sup>56</sup> his ideas were highly important for a certain direction in the discourse on Belarusian self-awareness. Historians tried to postulate an ethnic-based regional conscience of the Polish-speaking intelligentsia of the nineteenth century, calling them *licviny*, and occupying the regional conscience of Polish speaking noblemen of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for this purposes. Great figures such as Adam Mickiewicz are placed in the proximity of Belarusian culture, implicitly acquiring a certain degree of Belarusianness.<sup>57</sup>

But the ideas of Ermalovich represent not so much an opposition to Polish, but rather to the Lithuanian narrative, indirectly denying Lithuanians the right to their very name. Several political circles even propagated the idea of renaming the Republic Belarus as 'Litvania'.<sup>58</sup> This triggered, as a consequence, sharp reactions on the part of Lithuanian historians. When in 1993 a reader of Belarusian history directed to a

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<sup>54</sup> Mikola Ermalovich, *Pa shliadach adnago mifa*, Minsk 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Mikola Ermalovich, *Starazhytnaia Belarus'*. *Polacki i novagorodski peryady*, Minsk 1990: 351.

<sup>56</sup> See a moderate position in Henadz' Sahanovich, *Narys historyi Belarusi*, Minsk 2001:59-94. Zejmis, 'Belarusian National Historiography', 392-94 describes the 'more measured approach' of the majority of Belarusian historians.

<sup>57</sup> On the Polish life of Minsk in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century see Tadeusz Zienkiewicz, *Polskie życie literackie w Mińsku w XIX i na początku XX wieku do roku 1921*, Olsztyn 1997. For a Belarusian interpretation of Mickiewicz see Lew Miračycki, 'Adam Mickiewicz im Bewusstsein der Beloruthenen', in Zdzisław Krasnodębski and Stefan Garsztecki (ed.), *Sendung und Dichtung. Adam Mickiewicz in Europa*, Hamburg 2002: 293-300.

<sup>58</sup> See the website of this group: <<http://www.come.to.litvania.html>> [Accessed 9 February 2004].

broad public was published, Lithuanians reacted and rejected the main ideas.<sup>59</sup> The debate reached its peak with an article by the Lithuanian historian Edvardas Gudavičius, who not only rejected this idea as a whole, but also questioned the scientific character of his colleagues' contributions.<sup>60</sup> Alfredas Bumblauskas from Vilnius University spoke of the 'infantile diseases of a nascent Belarusian nationalism'.<sup>61</sup>

This is an excellent demonstration of the great importance of foundation myths in the formation of collective identities. The Belarusian attempt to usurp a common foundation myth, exclusively for one's own purposes, violated the needs of the Lithuanian construction of collective identity. For Lithuanians it is simply impossible to accept the thesis of a leading and founding role played by the Belarusians instead of the Lithuanians at the beginning of the Grand Duchy, because it stands in sharp contrast to a Lithuanian historical narrative, which imparts legitimation to modern Lithuania and as such forms an integral part of the *raison d'être* of the present-day Lithuanian state. This is moreover a narrative that has now been accepted by Polish historians and thereby once more confirmed in Lithuanian consciousness. Nevertheless, Lithuanian historians were, on the whole, open to sharing the heritage of the Grand Duchy with Belarusians, but proposed a totally different version of Belarusian ethnogenesis.<sup>62</sup> This remained so after the 'agreement' on history with Polish historians.

### *Choosing another past?*

In 1995 Belarusian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka introduced a new state flag and coat of arms. The Pahonia motive was rejected and replaced by a composition with visible similarities to the former Soviet coat of arms including such elements as the Red Star and wheat ears. This was not only a change of symbols, but the introduction of a second historical narrative on Belarusian history, conceptualising Belarus rather as part of the East-Slavonic family than a Western-orientated country. This meant a reorientation towards Soviet Belarusian traditions, as Lukashenka himself stressed.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, it marked a radical change in the formation of official identity: if with the Pahonia motive Belarusian identity was intended to use the whole past of the intersection area for its own purposes, now a sharp rupture was being made by

<sup>59</sup> I. Saverchanka and Zm. San'ko, *100 pytanaiŭ i adkazaŭ z historyi Belarusi*, Minsk 1993. In 1994 a translation of several passages was printed in *Naujasis Židinys*, followed by a comment by Kastytis Stalioraitis, 'DLK paveldas ir Baltarusiai', *Naujasis Židinys*, 9, 10, 1994: 52-9.

<sup>60</sup> Edvardas Gudavičius, 'Following the tracks of a myth', *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 1, 1996: 38-58.

<sup>61</sup> Alfredas Bumblauskas, 'The heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: perspectives of historical consciousness', in Grigorijus Potashenko ed. *The peoples of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*, Vilnius, 2002: 28.

<sup>62</sup> In Lithuania, the ideas of Edvardas Gudavičius on Belarusian ethnogenesis are widely accepted. He speaks of a proto-Belarusian ethnic group called Gudai, from which originated both the Belarusians and the Ukrainians: Edvardas Gudavičius, 'The Ruthenians', in Potashenko, *The peoples*, 45-56 (earlier published in Lithuanian in Vytautas Ališauskas et al. ed. *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos Kultūra. Tyrinėjimai ir vaizdai*, Vilnius 2001: 197-206).

<sup>63</sup> Vystuplenie Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' A. G. Lukashenko na vstreche s pobediteliami i prizierami konkursa na luchshii poiasnitel'nyi tekst k Gosudarstvennomu gerbu Respubliki Belarus' i Gosudarstvennomu flagu Respubliki Belarus' 25 sentiabria 1996, in Skobelev, *Gerb i flag*, 5. See also Astrid Sahm, 'Political Culture and National Symbols: Their Impact on the Belarusian Nation-building Process', *Nationalities Papers* 27 1999: 649-61 and Rüdiger Ritter, 'Ein Wappen, zwei Staaten. Der Reiter in Litauen und Belarus', *Osteuropa*, 54, 7, 2004: 37-51.

stressing Soviet foundation myths and putting a stop to using the whole intersected past as a primary source of identity.

But this proved unfeasible. The court historians around Lukashenka tried to ban Pahonia as a 'fascistic' symbol, but failed in excluding it totally from their narrative.<sup>64</sup> They failed also in dominating Belarusian society with their narrative and symbols: The main propagator of the idea of Pahonia as a state symbol had been the Belarusian People's Front 'Adradzhennje', the most important political factor in the early '90s. This organisation lost considerable political influence after 1995, but nevertheless it was possible to organise a conference in 2002 by members of the People's Front 'Adradzhennje' on 'Ideals of the Belarusian National Republic and the Rebirth of Belarus'.<sup>65</sup> In 2003, in Belarusian bookshops a huge coloured volume on Belarusian history was sold which had been printed in Slovakia and presenting an opposite version of Belarusian history, stressing the officially condemned foundation myths.<sup>66</sup> This demonstrates once more that it is not sufficient simply to ban intersected historical facts, because the narrative thus constructed seems artificial, violates historical memory and cannot prevail over other existing concepts. The dispute is currently going on with an open result but it is already clear that a stable construction of identity and peaceful relations cannot be achieved without dealing with the intersected past.

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<sup>64</sup> After the new state symbols were installed in June 1995, in December 1995 an official competition was started in order to find a text with the best explanation for them. In general, the Pahonia motive was not totally excluded from the new historical narrative, but lost its function as an important foundation myth and was now called an alien, Lithuanian symbol. For some texts of the competition see Skobelev, *Gerb i flag*, passim, for the condemnation of Pahonja as fascistic symbol see the articles of Aleksandr Stukanov, 'Emblema mira i truda': 88 and Dmitrij Chromchenko, 'Simvoly nadezhdy i dobra': 79.

<sup>65</sup> Navukova-histarychnaja kanferencyia 'Idealy BNR i Adradzhen'nje Belarusi', Mensk, 17 sakavika 1002 g., conference reader unpublished, in my archives (RR).

<sup>66</sup> Uladzimir Arlov and Zmitser Gerasimovich, *Kraina Belarus'. Iliustravanaia historyia*, Martin [Slovakia], 2003.

# The Bulgarian monarchy: a politically motivated revision of a historical image in a post-socialist transitional society

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From its foundation in 1878, which was a consequence of the previous Russian-Turkish war, up to 1946 pre-socialist Bulgaria had a monarchic constitution. It was finally abandoned on 8 September 1946 by a manipulated referendum, which turned Bulgaria into a 'People's Republic'. The last king, Simeon II, had to leave the country, but did not abdicate formally instead, but he kept his title as a monarch in exile.<sup>1</sup>

During the years of communist rule, which lasted until 1989, it was unthinkable for Simeon to return to his home country – let alone resume political functions. The rejection of the monarchy and its representatives as reactionary and feudalist by the communists was too clear. On the contrary, they were eager to eliminate any positive memory of the monarchy in the public. They did so by creating an official image of history which blamed the monarchy for being the main reason, or at least, a very important precondition for all negative developments in the history of Bulgaria since 1878. Significant terms, such as "adventurism" for Bulgaria's participation in the Balkan wars and the First World War under King Ferdinand or 'monarcho-fascism' for the authoritarian regime of Boris III, were chosen in order to make the period before 1944 a part of the public memory as a past which was dark but had been overcome.<sup>2</sup>

After the change of 1989 and the end of the communist monopoly on public opinion, all of a sudden the possibility of a historical re-evaluation of the Bulgarian monarchy occurred. At the time, politicians, that is, mainly the leaders of the "Union of Democratic Forces" (UDF), including President Petăr Stoyanov and Prime Minister Aleksandăr Kostov, journalists but also authors claiming to be academic, such as Božidar Dimitrov, the director of the National Historical Museum, took the lead in a movement which sometimes aimed at glorifying the monarchy, but in any case tried to present it as a positive era in contrast to the communist one-party dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> From 1996 onwards, the regular visits of Simeon II, partly initiated by the UDF, to Bulgaria from his Spanish exile helped the monarchic movement gain popularity. However, a real political perspective for him appeared only around the turn of the millennium, when the Bulgarians got increasingly disappointed with the established political parties as well as their representatives and started looking for new alternatives.<sup>4</sup> By spring 2001, Simeon managed to win so much support among the public that he took the risk of entering the Bulgarian political scene: as head of his organisation "The National Movement Simeon II" (NDSV) he participated in the

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<sup>1</sup> Generally about Bulgarian history see e.g. R.J. Crampton, 'Historical Foundations', in K.-D. Grothusen ed. *Südosteuropa-Handbuch*, Vol. VI, Göttingen 1990: 27-55.

<sup>2</sup> B. Koen, 'Die monarchofaschistische Oberschicht, Hitlerdeutschland und die Judenfrage', in Bulgarische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Institut für Geschichte (ed.), *Bulgarisch-deutsche Beziehungen und Verbindungen*, Vol. 4, Sofia 1989: 20-41 (20-2).

<sup>3</sup> About Bulgarian "Para-Historiography" see I. Iliev, 'On the history of inventing Bulgarian history', *IWM Working Paper* 5, 2000: 13. One of the most prominent representatives of this movement is Bozhidar Dimitrov, head of the National Historical Museum in Sofia.

<sup>4</sup> M. Wien, 'Ab heute ist Bulgarien nicht mehr dasselbe Land'. Die Parlamentswahlen vom 17. Juni 2001', *Südosteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsforschung*, 4/2001: 13-32 (13).

parliamentary elections of 17 June and, by winning 43% of the votes and 50% of the seats in Parliament, he achieved an overwhelming victory. Paradoxically, he now had to become prime minister, i.e. take a position within a republican government. It is rather debatable whether he had actively aimed at this 'career', since he hesitated for more than three weeks after the elections before he took this step. Now, as prime minister, Simeon, who had never abdicated as king, found himself in the republican hierarchy below the President, the Vice-President and the President of Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

However, his success in the elections would have been impossible, if the general attitude of the Bulgarian public towards the monarchy had not fundamentally changed since 1989 – even if other reasons, such as deep public disappointment with Aleksandăr Kostov's UDF government, might have played an important role as well. This attitude towards the monarchy, which directly focussed on Simeon's public appearance, was, nevertheless, from a historical perspective, related rather to the monarch as an individual than to the monarchic institution itself, i.e. its constitutional relevance. This was true not only after 1989, but also before.

### *Adventurism and monarcho-fascism*

As regards the historical evaluation of the Bulgarian monarchy, the country's socialist historiography focussed primarily on the person of Boris III and his government. Compared to him, relatively little attention was paid to the previous monarchs, least of all to the first Prince of Bulgaria, Alexander von Battenberg.<sup>6</sup> His successor, King Ferdinand, was portrayed, by both socialist as well as post-socialist historiography including public memory, as a monarch who failed.<sup>7</sup> The most important reason for this is, of course, Bulgaria's defeat in the First World War, which resulted in Ferdinand's abdication and his return to Germany, his country of origin. A positive aspect in this portrait was, however, the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1908 and the country's advancement to the status of a kingdom. Under Ferdinand, however, Bulgaria participated in three wars between 1912 and 1918, which finally resulted in the so-called "National catastrophe".<sup>8</sup> Although there is no dissent as to the disastrous character of these events, new tendencies in the evaluation of the motives of Ferdinand's policy emerged after the system change of 1989 – in contrast to Marxist historiography, which had blamed the king for political and military adventurism.<sup>9</sup> Since then, academic historiography as well as journalists and other non-academic publishers have shown an increasing understanding, if not sympathy, for the decision taken by Ferdinand's regime to wage war. The revival of evaluative patterns, known from the interwar period, is characteristic for such tendencies. One of their most prominent representatives is the clearly nationalist historian Božidar Dimitrov, known from many appearances on TV. His works enjoy a broad public reception and, thus, have a significant influence on public images of history. According to him, the Balkan Wars and the First World War were not military

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> About Alexander v. Battenberg see, e.g. J. Geševa, 'Režimăt na pälnoštijata (1881-1881) – svoeobrazna forma na upravlennie na dăržavata', in *Bălgarska akademija na naukite. Institut po istorija ed. 120 godini izpălnitelna vlast v Bălgarija*, Sofia 1999: 91-103.

<sup>7</sup> M. Petrov, 'Nacionalnijat văpros v politikata na bălgarskite pravitelstva (1879-1919)', in: *120 godini*, 128-47.

<sup>8</sup> About the Bulgarian independence see: C. Todorova, 'Die europäische Diplomatie und die Erklärung der Unabhängigkeit Bulgariens im Jahre 1908', in *Bulgarisch-deutsche Beziehungen*, Vol. 4, 127-52.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. G. Markov, 'Germanija i učastieto na Bălgarija v balkanskite vojni (1912-1913)', in *Bulgarisch-deutsche Beziehungen*, Vol. 4, 153-80.

adventures, but wars for national unification supposed to integrate those Bulgarian territories which were still under foreign, i.e. Ottoman, rule into their motherland. The only mistake Ferdinand made in Dimitrov's view was diplomatic dilettantism. In this context, the wars for "National Unification" were nothing but an expression of Ferdinand's aim to fulfill his national mission, i.e. the unification of all ethnic Bulgarians within one state. Therefore, the critique of the king's policy, as it is articulated by the representatives of this view, as well as by a substantial part of the Bulgarian public, does not contain a fundamental rejection, especially as far as war is concerned, but rather focuses on "technical" mistakes made by the monarch.<sup>10</sup>

For the most part, Bulgarian historical public interest, however, is devoted to King Boris III. The monarchic idea is mainly associated with his person. In most cases, the debates about this form of government do not deal with the constitutional consequences of monarchy but rather concentrate on Boris's concrete policy, which is then taken as a basis either for accepting or rejecting the monarchy in general.

Historical attention is mainly directed to the last third of his time in power, i.e. the years between 1935 and his unexpected death in 1943. During this period, the king ruled the country in an autocratic way and, thus, was responsible for all important political decisions. This fact becomes even more relevant, since at that time the Second World War began and forced Boris to take fundamental decisions not only as regarded Bulgarian foreign policy but also the internal configuration of the country.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the authoritarian regime Boris introduced in 1935 because of his dissatisfaction with the "Zveno"-government and due to Bulgaria's accession to the Tri-Partite-Pact in 1941, socialist historiography unambiguously labelled this era as 'monarcho-fascist'.<sup>12</sup> It thus positioned the king's government within its ideologically determined patterns of historical interpretation. It was the characterisation of the system as 'fascist', which provided the necessary legitimacy of the 'antifascist' illegal communist dominated resistance movement, the "Fatherland Front". Post- or non-socialist Bulgarian historiography, however, has clearly rejected the term 'monarcho-fascist' to characterise Boris's regime, pointing out a number of fundamental differences between his rule and the ones of Hitler and Mussolini in Germany and Italy respectively.<sup>13</sup>

However, before, as well as after 1989, one historical event during Boris's government attracted and still attracts most of the attention connected with debate on monarchy in Bulgaria: the survival of the 48,000 Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War. Given the German-Bulgarian alliance this fact has caused astonishment, but the debate about it has always been focussed on the question 'who was responsible for the salvation of the Jews?' Before 1989, there was only one clear answer: the communist resistance within the framework of the "Fatherland Front".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> B. Dimitrov, Bulgaria in the wars for national unification, in [www.bulgaria.com/history/wars.html](http://www.bulgaria.com/history/wars.html), last accessed: July 2002.

<sup>11</sup> N. Poppetrov, 'Autoritarismus und Autoritäres Regime in Bulgarien', in E. Oberländer, R. Jaworski et al. eds. *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmitteleuropa 1919-1944*, Mainz 1995: 181-95 (195). V. Migeu, 'Formirane na koncepcijata za parlamentarnija model na bălgarskata monarchofašistka dăržava (1937-1938)', in Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite. Institut po istorija ed. *Obštvenno-političeskijat život na Bălgarija 1878-1944* (Izledvanija po bălgarska istorija, Vol. 10), Sofia 1990: 289-326.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> I. Dimitrov, 'The Main Factor of the Salvation of the Bulgarian Jews', in *Jahrbuch der jüdischen Kulturorganisation in Bulgarien*, 24, 1989: 242. Also: M. Wien, *Antisemitismus in Bulgarien im Spiegel der Parlamentsdebatten zum „Gesetz zum Schutze der Nation“ 1940*, MA-Thesis, Munich 1999: 1.

Even after 1989 public discourse about the fate of the Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War did not become much more differentiated. Since political life in the country became increasingly polarised, the answer to the question who had saved the Jews was equal to a revelation of one's own political orientation – either towards the 'red' socialist or the 'blue' oppositional movement "Union of Democratic Forces" (UDF). In contrast to the socialists, the blue movement claimed the merit of the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews from the death-camps for King Boris himself.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Boris turned from a fascist oppressor of the people into a responsible father of his nation, who had managed not only to save 'his' Jews from deportation, but also to keep his country out of the German campaign against the USSR.<sup>16</sup> Now he was no longer an irresponsible politician who, betraying his own national interests, had aimed at an alliance with Germany, but rather a clever tactician or even a 'fox', as he was frequently labelled, who had made the best out of the unavoidable cooperation with the Nazis.<sup>17</sup> From this point of view and arguing in a very pragmatic way, also the annexation of Southern Dobruža from Romania, which was achieved in 1940 cooperating with Nazi-Germany, is booked positively in the balance of Boris's government. Generally, the positive way in which he is remembered by the Bulgarian public today is decisively influenced by his clever policy towards Germany and the avoided deportation of 48,000 Jews. The fascist elements of his regime are increasingly neglected by the public memory.<sup>18</sup>

This discourse is important not only for the re-evaluation of the monarchic institution itself and its most prominent representatives. It is also motivated by a broad request for a figure of national identification. In this sense, Boris becomes not only the personified evidence that a monarchy can also achieve positive results, he also embodies good pre-socialist Bulgaria and, thus, provides for the possibility of the country's 'return' to its history after 45 years of communist dictatorship.

On the other hand, the old historical terminology is still broadly in use. Especially the period between 1935 and 1944 is still commonly labelled as "fascist", which actually does not necessarily mean that the users of this term can give a precise definition of it. Correspondingly, the forces of the "Fatherland Front", i.e. the partisans are called 'antifascist'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a parallel presence of contradictory historical images within large parts of Bulgarian society must be noted. In this context, one and the same person might characterise the era of Boris III, viewed as a responsible leader who guided his nation amidst the dangers of his time, by using the terms he has learned during decades of communist rule. Attempts at a more balanced evaluation of Boris's regime, coming from outside the daily political confrontations, have hardly had any impact beyond the academic discourse. This, however, does not mean that the academic discourse itself was not influenced by party politics. Apparently the latter have a stronger impact on academics than vice versa, and it might be wrong to draw a clear separation line between these two contexts.

Authors like Nikolay Poppetrov or Evgeniya Kalinova and Iskra Baeva have elaborated on the authoritarian features of Boris's regime as well as its differences

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. H. Bojadžiev, *Spasjavaneto na bălgarskite evrei prez Vtorata svetovna vojna*, Sofia 1991.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. See also G. Nissim, *Der Mann der Hitler stoppte*, Berlin 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Poppetrov, *Autoritarismus*, see above and B. Dimitrov, 'Bulgaria in the interim between bourgeois democracy and fascism', in [www.bulgaria.com/history/bulgaria/interim.html](http://www.bulgaria.com/history/bulgaria/interim.html), last accessed: July 2002.

<sup>19</sup> B. Dimitrov, *Bulgaria in the interim*, see above. More differentiated arguments can be found in: E. Kalinova, I. Baeva, *Bălgarskite prechodi 1944-1999*, Sofija 2000: 13 and P.S. Cvetkov, 'Demokracijata i nejnite alternativi v Bălgarija mežu dvete svetovni vojni', in *120 godini*, 177-87.

from fascist regimes of the same time. Especially Poppetrov, who published articles about this topic already during the 1980s in West-German periodicals, has presented a clear and differentiated picture of the King's government between 1918 and 1943. As mentioned above, instead of the ideologically discredited term 'monarcho-fascism' he characterised the regime as 'monarchic-authoritarian with single fascist elements'. According to him, several anti-constitutional actions taken by Boris during the years of his government are most typical of his political style.<sup>20</sup>

### *His Majesty the prime minister*

Nevertheless it is exactly this 'straightforward' style of policy-making, which makes monarchy attractive to its Bulgarian supporters. The reference to King Boris, who, according to this view, had conducted an intelligent foreign policy, ended domestic political confrontations and proved to be humane by saving the Jews, serves as a foundation for the protests of large parts of Bulgarian society against the obvious corruption and incompetence of Bulgarian politicians. Moreover, this disposition of the electorate opened the opportunity to Boris's son, Simeon II, formally the last king of Bulgaria, to appear on the country's political scene in spring 2001. Even though the results of opinion polls proved that in the Bulgarian public there was no majority for the reintroduction of monarchy, the great popularity Simeon achieved during his campaign seems to be inexplicable without the above mentioned change in the historical image of the monarchic idea after 1989.<sup>21</sup> He profited from his father's royal aura, which in many cases resulted in a transformation of the sympathies he experienced in large parts of the country into a quasi-religious admiration. Thus, the people's expectations towards Simeon became clear: following in his father's footsteps he would come to Bulgaria like a messiah, take things into his hands, and solve the problems, which mainly are of a social nature, from a position above the level of everyday politics.<sup>22</sup>

These expectations were certainly not an expression of deep anti-democratic feelings among the people of Bulgaria, but they showed great disappointment about the achievements of parliamentary democracy after 1989. Neither the Socialists nor the Union of Democratic forces, having been in power since 1997, had realised a significant increase in the standard of living. Moreover, they had been discredited by many cases of corruption. Therefore, Simeon had a double advantage when he started his election campaign in spring 2001: first, he had the aura of a king, second, he came from 'outside' and, thus, was not compromised by any Bulgarian political intrigues.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to his royal appearance, however, he made some concrete promises and programmatic statements during his campaign, which also played an important role for his overwhelming victory in the elections of June 2001. The most remarkable one certainly was the promise to raise the general standard of living within 800 days. At the time when his election programme was published, it was, on the other hand, unclear, if, in case of a victory, Simeon himself would become prime minister, i.e. he would be responsible for the realisation of this policy.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See above.

<sup>21</sup> M. Wien, Parlamentswahlen: 13-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Simeon's electoral programme: *Bălgarija - dobăr dom za svoite graždani. Predizborna programa na koalicija "Nacionalno dviženie Simeon Vtori"*, Sofija 2001.



The extremely personalised character of his campaign which presented Simeon as a 'King' functioned as an indicator of the attraction of the monarchic idea to the Bulgarian public. As the results of the election prove, he successfully used his royal status in manifold ways. First of all, there was the naming of his 'movement', created on the basis of two small parties, since Simeon had been forbidden by a decision of the Supreme Court to participate in the elections with his own party. The movement was named "The National Movement Simeon the Second".<sup>25</sup> Thus, Simeon made clear that he was not only the central, but also the constituting figure of the movement, i.e. its personified legitimacy. Using his royal name including the number – 'the Second' – instead of his actual family name 'Sakskoburggotski', he implicitly laid claims to the throne. This impression was underlined by the fact that his staff called him "Your Majesty", and that he resided in his old royal castle 'Vranya' outside Sofia. Additionally, he made ambiguous public statements concerning the question of the reintroduction of monarchy. Being asked about this issue he usually replied that this question was not on the agenda "at the moment" or that it would be decided as soon as the time came.<sup>26</sup> In addition to this, there were speculations that he might participate in the presidential elections in autumn 2001, and that afterwards, based on the parliamentary majority of his movement, he would try to change the constitution in favour of a reintroduction of the monarchy. Those who made these speculations forgot, however, that such a plan, if it existed, was impracticable, since the constitution requires that candidates must have had their residence in Bulgaria for at least five years in order to be admitted to the presidential elections, which was not the case with Simeon.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, speculation continued to the effect that what Simeon was aiming at was not the kind of political responsibility a prime minister assumes, but rather the monarchic role of the father of the nation. After his triumph in the elections he seemed to confirm these assumptions. In a manner which appears to be unusual for a parliamentary democracy he made the public wait for about three weeks, before he decided to declare his readiness to become prime minister. Apparently he did so very reluctantly and claiming not to have foreseen this development of events. Obviously he found the post of prime minister inappropriate for himself as he now had to run the risk that daily political problems might damage not only his personal reputation, but also the monarchic idea, which, in the public view, was associated with him.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding the possible future success of his government, the elections suggested that royal aura, such as Simeon's, fascinated the electorate and was able to influence the voting significantly, even though, according to the above mentioned opinion polls, the elections cannot be interpreted as support for his re-enthronisation. Nevertheless, the public notion of the monarchy had become to a large extent connected to Simeon – similar to the change in its historical image, which almost completely was associated with Boris III. The increasing respect he, i.e. his memory, enjoyed during the 1990s was beneficial for his son Simeon, too. Occasionally, it resulted in the naïve assumption that Simeon had inherited his father's political capabilities and, thus, was able to guide his country through the uncertainties of the future.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> M. Wien, Parlamentswahlen, 27. Also: F. Nienhusen, 'Im Reich des schüchternen Königs', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 16 July 2001: 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Konstitucija na Republika Bălgarija*, 13.7.1991, čl. 93 (2). See: <[www.parliament.bg/const.html](http://www.parliament.bg/const.html)>, last accessed 7 May 2001.

<sup>28</sup> M. Wien: Parlamentswahlen, 31f.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 13-5.

### *The image of the monarchy in connection with political and ideological convictions*

The way in which the historical image of the Bulgarian monarchy changed after 1989 indicates that, as described above, this development basically consisted of a politically, as well as socially, motivated re-evaluation of its leading representatives. This transformation ranged from the obligatory rejection of the 'fascist' monarchy before 1989 to a situation at the turn of century, when the possibility of its re-introduction was openly discussed. These discussions were for the most part associated with the son of Boris III, Simeon II.

The Union of Democratic Forces made clear to which extent the relation of the political parties to the monarchy depended on political interests and strategies of election campaigns. As mentioned above, until the end of the 1990s the position of the UDF was friendly towards the monarchy – they had invited Simeon to Bulgaria several times to gain political profit from his image and that of the monarchy – , though the UDF were not monarchist, and this was only part of their anti-communist attitude. Representatives of the party, such as Prime Minister Kostov or President Stoyanov, showed up in public together with Simeon and re-introduced the royal code of arms.<sup>30</sup> As soon as Simeon revealed his political ambitions in spring 2001, they started to downgrade him to the status of a political *parvenu*, without success, as the elections proved.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the Bulgarian Socialist Party tried to remain distant, even indifferent to Simeon and the confrontation between him and UDF. Seemingly, BSP focussed on mobilising their genuine electorate – still trying to overcome the consequences of the defeat of 1997. Generally, they remained out of the focus of public attention which clearly focussed on Simeon.

The voting, the events associated with it and the following months and years made clear, however, that the Bulgarian attitude towards the monarchy and its historical image depends on political developments. After the first two years of Simeon's government the public enthusiasm for him as well as for the monarchy seemed to decline. The sympathy he had enjoyed at the beginning had been grounded in two factors: firstly, the generally miserable living conditions in connection with political disorientation and, secondly, the fact that he was a man of the right age, who embodied the monarchic idea and at the same time was at least apparently capable of taking political responsibility. This could be a possible explanation as to why he was the only former East European monarch who managed to regain considerable political influence in his country after decades of communist dictatorship.<sup>32</sup> This influence, however, declined again after the elections of 2005, which brought the socialists back to being the strongest party. Still, they were forced to form a broad coalition with a number of other parties, including Simeon's NDSV. 'His Majesty the Prime Minister' had to abdicate and turned into a 'normal' Bulgarian politician as the chairman of his party.

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<sup>30</sup> J. Gruber, 'Bulgarien im ersten Jahr der Regierung von Ex-König Simeon Sakschoburggotski. Handwerkliche Fehler des Kabinetts oder Beginn einer krisenhaften Entwicklung?', in [www.kas.de/publikationen/2002/ai/03\\_gruber.pdf](http://www.kas.de/publikationen/2002/ai/03_gruber.pdf), 2., last accessed: July 2002

<sup>31</sup> Wien: Parlamentswahlen 13.

<sup>32</sup> See also: H.-J. Hoppe, 'Saison für Könige! Macht das bulgarische Modell Schule?', in *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, 3, 2002: 54-67.



# Emerging institutional order? National Investment Funds in Poland

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This paper analyses the mass privatisation programme (MPP) implemented in Poland in the mid-1990s from the perspective of transition reforms and the development of corporate governance systems. Although the programme covered only 512 companies the collected evidence provides a unique opportunity to compare the Polish MPP to the schemes implemented in other post-socialist economies of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia as well as to other privatisation methods applied in Poland. The Polish MPP created intermediaries in the form of National Investment Funds (NIF), which were granted the leading and minor status in the ownership of their portfolio companies. The clear ownership and the incentive structure appeared to be important mechanisms that helped minimise the control vacuum and stimulated restructuring and privatisation of the portfolio companies. Despite the restructuring efforts the financial results remain relatively blurred and the performance of privatised companies as well as the funds appear to be disappointing.

## *Introduction*

Since 1989 Poland has been grouped with the transition economies shifting from central planning to a market economy. The transition process includes significant changes in the political, social and economic system. Although the political changes are indisputably an important part of the transition, the development and direction of change can be only sustained and reinforced by economic success, or at least improvement. It is agreed that the creation of more efficient governance mechanisms is a crucial aspect of transition reforms.

The privatisation process is one of the most important reforms from the perspective of transition as well as for the development of corporate governance structures. At the end of 2006 the private sector generated 80% of GDP. Out of 8,453 state owned companies in 1990, 7,147 were privatised by the end of 2004.<sup>2</sup> A total of 2,885 companies were privatised via direct privatisation, which appeared to be the dominant ownership transformation scheme, 1,545 companies were commercialised, 352 underwent indirect privatisation, 512 were included in the mass privatisation programme and 1,853 were covered by liquidation procedures. However, in the register of January 2005 there were 1,306 state enterprises and the state still is involved in 15% of privatised companies in Poland.

The goal of this paper is to present the mass privatisation scheme introduced in Poland in mid-1995 in the form of National Investment Funds and on the basis of collected evidence to answer questions on the effectiveness of the mass privatisation programme in Poland. The assessment of the Polish MPP will include two levels of analysis: a comparative analysis of the NIF programmes versus other privatisation methods applied in Poland such as direct sale to foreign and domestic investors,

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<sup>2</sup> Ministerstwo Skarbu Państwa (State Treasury), Ocena przebiegu prywatyzacji majątku Skarbu Państwa w 2004 roku (The report on privatisation reforms in 2004), Warsaw 2005:10.

Management and Employee Buyouts (MEBO) and sub-stage of commercialisation; and an international comparative analysis of mass privatisation programmes implemented in other Central and East European countries: Russia, the Czech and Slovak Republics as well as East Germany and Estonia. On the basis of previous research as well as the most common problems of transition economies the criteria for assessing the NIF scheme will be the following:

1. Shifting ownership of assets from state to private hands;
2. Enhancing the performance of companies by privatisation to strategic investors, restructuring of the companies and reducing the control vacuum and looting carried out mostly by powerful opportunistic insiders;
3. Acceleration and increasing the scope of the privatisation process;
4. Reducing the costs of ownership change from the perspective of the state;
5. Distribution of, at least part of, the 'national' wealth to Polish citizens;
6. Development of corporate governance mechanisms;
7. Boosting public interest and participation in the stock market.

The remainder is organised as follows. In the first section the paper discusses the programme designing process, the goals and the stages of the programme. The second section analyses the functioning of the NIFs and their role in corporate governance. The third section discusses the results of NIFs restructuring activity. The fourth section concludes the paper with an overall assessment of the mass privatisation and its contribution to the development of the corporate governance system in Poland.

### *1. The mass privatisation programme*

After 1989 Poland applied the radical approach to macroeconomic reforms (so-called shock therapy). The mass privatisation programme was, however, significantly delayed. The main reasons behind this delay were rooted mostly in political changes and the unwillingness of political parties to formulate the goals of the mass privatisation scheme precisely<sup>3</sup>. The authors of the Polish MPP could rely on the experience of other countries, especially Russia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and prevent the privatised companies from mushrooming and expropriation by insiders. Political turmoil and insecurity, however, did not provide a good environment for foreign investors. The delay also affected the attitude of workers in the companies chosen to join the programme and led to the further deterioration of NIFs portfolio companies, which were in desperate need of capital and restructuring.

The main goal of the programme was to assist the shifting of assets from state-owned companies to private ones and to intensify and extend the range of ownership transformation. The initial plan was to create open public investment funds for the mass privatisation programme, which would then become private funds. The mandate of the NIFs was to promote the development of profitable and valuable companies operating in Poland and to permit the public to participate by enabling them to acquire shares in the NIFs. Moreover, selling companies through an intermediary and not directly by the state reduced the costs of the ownership change. Finally, in many cases the government realised there were not enough investors with substantial capital interested in buying out state-owned companies.

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<sup>3</sup> Stanisława Teresa Surdykowska, *Prywatyzacja*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1997: 140.

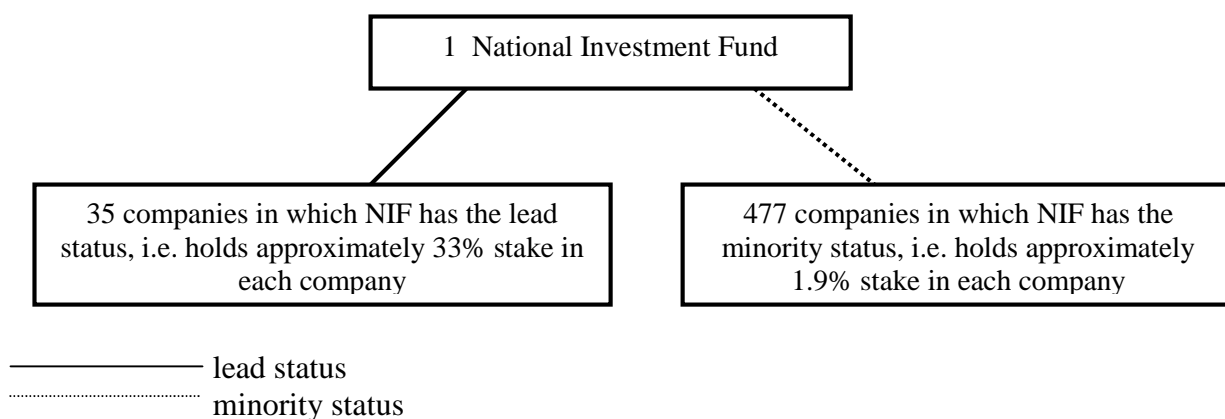
### 1.1. The scheme

The Polish MPP covered 512 large and medium, mainly manufacturing, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) with about 10% of industrial sector sales to participate in 15 National Investment Funds. Each SOE was incorporated as a joint stock company, 60% of the shares were allocated to the NIF scheme, 15% was given free to employees and 25% was retained by the state<sup>4</sup>.

#### *The NIF privatisation stage*

In December 1994 the supervisory boards of NIFs were officially appointed and started negotiations with management companies. By July 1995, NIFs established as companies by Company Act with capital of 100,000 PLN provided by the state as subsidy selected their fund management companies and signed 10-year agreements with them<sup>5</sup>. In March 1995 portfolio companies were distributed amongst NIFs on a random basis to ensure that all funds would end up with approximately equal amounts of assets under their control. The distribution of the share was carried out in a number of rounds on four occasions. As a result many funds ended up with diversified portfolios not concentrated on any particular industry. In the end each NIF gained the lead status in 34-35 firms and minority status (of 1.93% shares) in around 477 firms. NIFs held 60% of a company's shares and were to manage the sale of the shares<sup>6</sup>. In order to ensure that NIFs would play an active role in the companies they had in their portfolios, provisions in the MPP stipulated that leading stakes had to be sold only as a whole, whereas the minority stakes were the subject of unrestricted trading. Figure 1 illustrates the structure that each NIF ended up with.

Figure 1: Illustration of the initial NIF structure



Source: based on [www.magnapolonia.com.pl](http://www.magnapolonia.com.pl)

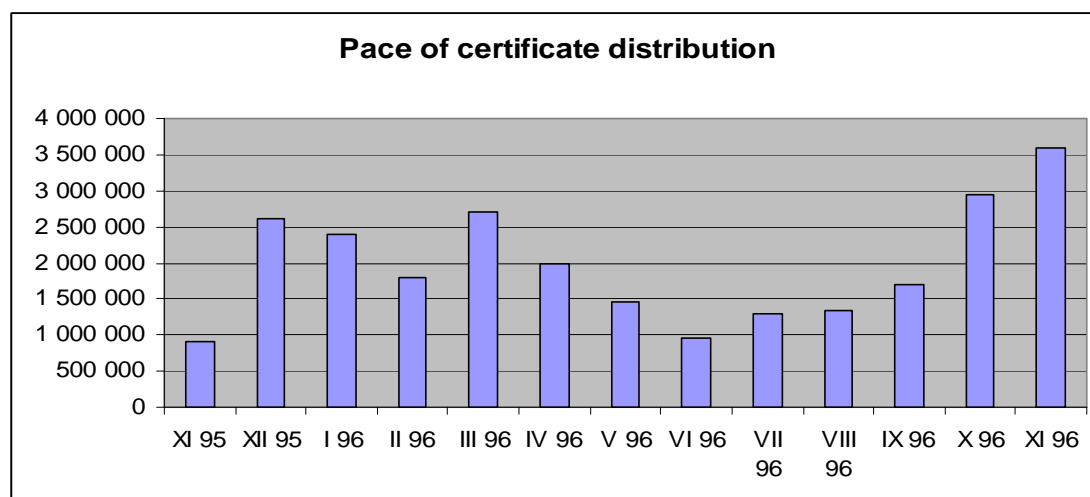
<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Aussenegg, 'Going public in Poland: Case-by-case privatisation, mass privatisation and private sector initial public offerings', William Davidson Institute Working Paper, no. 292, 1999, <http://wdi.umich.edu/files/Publications/WorkingPapers/wd292.pdf>, [accessed on 2 April, 2002] (para. 8 of 44).

<sup>5</sup> Malwina Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych', Uniwersytet Szczeciński 2001: 5.

<sup>6</sup> Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych': 6.

From November 1995 until November 1996 the state-owned bank PKO BP started to distribute the ownership certificates for a fee of PLN 20 (\$7-8). The certificate functioned as a claim to the ownership of funds. Each adult Pole could take a certificate and then convert it into 15 shares (1 share per each NIF)<sup>7</sup>. Figure 2 presents the pace of certificate distribution.

Figure 2: Pace of certificate distribution



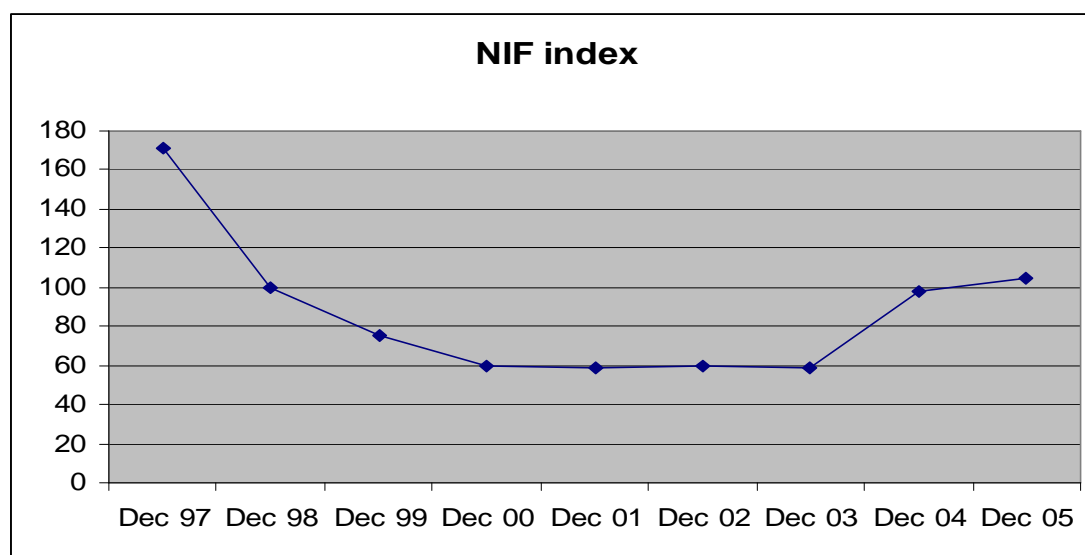
Source: Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003'

### *Funds commercial phase*

In March 1997 NIFs shares were listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The Treasury, which held 100% of shares of NIFs at this point, began to transfer 85% of these shares to certificate holders who applied for the conversion of their certificates through a brokerage house. The remaining 15% was kept by the Treasury for the payment of performance and loyalty fees by the fund management companies. In June 1997 the certificates and shares of NIFs were listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. Certificate prices went significantly up starting from PLN 50, reaching PLN 175 (the highest price) by February 1997 and then falling back to about PLN 150 by June 1997. During the last day of quotation (last session in December 1998) a certificate was worth 62 PLN which makes it 40% lower than the IPO price. The NIF index reached its top value during the first weeks of quotation and since then NIF shares prices fell reaching around 1/3 of that value in 2005. Figure below presents NIF index 1997-2005.

<sup>7</sup> The initial public interest in the mass privatisation programme was striking: 25 855 417 out of 27 395 000 eligible Poles (94.5%) took part in that programme, although the authors of the MPP predicted a far lower participation of about 10 million citizens.

Figure 3: NIF index (points) 1997-2003



Source: own calculations based on reports of NIF programme and database of Bank Ochrony Środowiska (available at [www.bossa.pl](http://www.bossa.pl))

As shown in figure 1 the value of the index fell after the listing date. The increase in 2004 and 2005 was connected to the dividend payout and the upward trend of the stock exchange. Since 2006 the Warsaw Stock Exchange has not produced a NIF index due to the end of the programme.

### 1.2. Companies selected for MPP

According to the estimates of the Ministry of Ownership Transformation there were around 1100 companies, which could join the programme at the time the scheme was under construction. However, the anti-privatisation lobby was strong and many companies were not included in the scheme due to political reasons. Additionally, the delay in the introduction of the programme also affected the number of companies selected. Some of the potential company candidates were being privatised or had a different status including large companies such as PKP (Polish railways) or LOT (Polish airlines) and therefore did not qualify for the programme<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, alcohol and tobacco manufacturers, power plants, wood processing companies and sugar manufacturers were excluded from the MPP mostly for political reasons and the pressure of the anti-privatisation lobby. In August 1992 an estimated 600 companies valued at PLN 150 billion (15% of the value of state-owned companies) were to join the programme since that number was meant to be the 'breakeven point' of the scheme. Since the 16 largest companies were excluded, the value of companies in the MPP dropped to 6.56% of state-owned companies. As a result, many companies selected for the programme represented "problematic" sectors such as food processing or textile industries.

Companies selected for the NIF programme were, by Polish standards, large and medium, though not the largest in size and were recruited mostly from the industrial sector.

<sup>8</sup> Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych', 6; Surdykowska, *Prywatyzacja*, 239-40.



Table 1: Characteristics of companies involved in NIF programme

Sector	Percentage	Number of employees			
		Up to 200	201-500	501-1000	More than 1000
Industry	80.5	9.2	23.6	25.8	21.9
Construction	14.6	1.4	6.1	5.9	1.2
Others	4.9	2.8	0.9	1.1	0.2
Total	100	13.4	30.6	32.8	23.2

Source: Szczepkowska, *Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych*, Uniwersytet Szczeciński, p. 7

In terms of financial conditions the bottom line was profit equal to zero, with a minimum turnover of \$10 million. As a matter of fact, however, the financial position of the companies varied significantly ranging from highly profitable to loss making: while 1/5 of the portfolio companies were sound enough to be listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange in a short period of time, 31% of them were recording losses<sup>9</sup>. The approximate book value of their assets was over PLN 7 billion (\$3 billion at the end of 1994) although varying again from more than \$43 million to \$4.3 million.

### 1.3. Fund management companies

Fifteen case fund management companies sponsored by institutional investors, both Polish and foreign, were usually contracted for two years with the option of contract extension for up to 10 years. The compensation of the fund managers was based on:

1. One fixed fee paid annually in dollars and adjustable annually for inflation and certain changes in the portfolio of the NIF. It was fixed for the 10-year life of the fund management agreement. The management fee was fixed for each fund separately via negotiations between the supervisory board and the fund management company and it usually accounted for 2-3% of the asset value. The aggregate fee for all funds was \$42 million per annum<sup>10</sup>.
2. Fees for a performance-based bonus included the annual performance fee from the sale of 1% of the NIF's assets and a loyalty fee of 5 % of the NIF's assets at the end of the 10-year contractual period.

The total remuneration of fund managers accounts for approximately 3.5-4.5% of the value of the assets, which by Western standards is rather generous,<sup>11</sup> to enable the fund managers' to focus on the value of their portfolio companies and on value-increasing policies.

<sup>9</sup> Iraj Hashi, "The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference", Working Paper no. 99.5, Staffordshire University, 1999, <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/business/economics/papers/ec1999-05.pdf>, [accessed 15 April 2002] (para. 10 of 37).

<sup>10</sup> Hashi, "The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference", (para. 15 of 37).

<sup>11</sup> Hashi, 'The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference', (para. 16 of 37).

## 2. Corporate governance in the MPP

Mass privatisation by definition leads to diffused ownership (shares/ vouchers distributed amongst millions of citizens) and results in a vacuum of monitoring and supervision and the increased discretion of managers who are likely to pursue self-dealing at the expense of shareholders. The Polish mass privatisation programme was designed to create a dominant owner for enterprises and to provide the appropriate incentives for them which would in turn lead to the restructuring of the companies and speeding up their transfer to the private sector. Thus the Polish MPP tried to overcome the potential problems of investment funds identified in the case of Czech and Slovak MPPs.<sup>12</sup> The characteristics and the role of investment funds participating in mass privatisations in Central and East European countries received harsh criticism for lacking incentives to restructure. Funds in the Czech and Russian MPP, during the early stages before concentration in hands of insiders, usually owned 20-30% of the company and were likely to utilise their power without restructuring. The fund management companies went for self-dealing such as tunnelling and siphoning.<sup>13</sup> This was done through a set of special contracts and non-transparent side deals with firms related to the fund management companies. In Poland the leading funds were monitored by other minority funds and were considered important to the reputation of the fund management company. Governance as well as the incentive structure of the MPP was believed to reduce the principal-agent problems at the company level and thus in the Polish programme the corporate governance problem was partly shifted from the 'enterprise level' to the 'fund level', in other words, how funds monitored and controlled themselves<sup>14</sup>.

### 2.1. The ownership of the portfolio companies

Portfolio companies faced significant differences between the initially dispersed and those with more concentrated ownership, in enabling funds to pursue their strategies. To improve the efficiency of their governance structure NIFs decided to enter into mutual agreements for the consolidation of shares:

- The first consolidation took place in October 1996 and six funds joined the agreement<sup>15</sup> – V NIF SA Victoria, VI NIF SA Magna Polonia, VIII NIF SA Octavia, X NIF SA Foksal, XI NIF SA, XII NIF SA Piast. It referred to shares of leading companies – the exchange included five different packages of 1.93% in different companies for one of 9.65% of one company focusing on sectors in which they already owned companies. All together 162 companies were subject to this exchange process. As a result the six funds had two types of minority stake: 9.65% (the so called super-minority) in 27 companies and

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<sup>12</sup> Coffee John C. Jr., 'Inventing a Corporate Monitor for Transitional Economics: The Uncertain Lessons from the Czech and Polish Experiences' in Frydman Roman, Gray Cheryl W., Rapaczynski Andrzej (eds.), *Corporate Governance in Central Europe and Russia*, World Bank/CEU Press, 1996, 1, chap. 4, 134.

<sup>13</sup> David Ellerman, 'Voucher privatisation with investment funds: An institutional analysis', World Bank, 1997,

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/dec/Publications/Workpapers/WPS1900series/wps1924/wps1924.pdf> [accessed on 11 April, 2002] (para. 3 of 12).

<sup>14</sup> Hashi, "The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference", (para. 17 of 37).

<sup>15</sup> Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych', 10.

1.93% in the rest of them. The ownership structure of these 162 companies underwent significant concentration: one leading NIF (33%), one fund with 9.65% stake and nine minority fund-owners with stakes of 1.93%. From the perspective of NIFs super-minority holdings were expected to have a premium value over minority holdings as they would reduce the monitoring as well as transaction costs. The reduction was probably insufficient as they still had minority holdings in about 350 companies and as a result funds tended to sell these minority stakes.

- In February 1998 the same six NIFs signed another agreement for share consolidation aimed at further reducing the number of minority companies in their portfolios.

## 2.2. The ownership of the NIFs

Additionally there was a trend towards ownership concentration at the fund level.<sup>16</sup> Financial institutions appeared to prefer the gradual purchasing of NIFs' shares and opted in many cases for concentrated ownership in the NIFs. One move toward the trend was the merger of III NIF SA and XI NIF SA into Jupiter NIF on 31 December 2000. Researchers note that it is expected that over time the ownership of NIFs will become more concentrated. The NIF formula created financial intermediaries managing entrusted shares in the privatised companies in the name of the owners and the costs of heavily dispersed ownership were substantial.<sup>17</sup> As a result, NIFs were controlled by powerful financial groups.

Table 2: The dominant shareholders of NIFs

The dominant shareholder	Shares in NIF	The management company
PEKAO SA	NIF Jupiter – 32,76%	Trinity Management
BRE BANK SA	I NIF – 14,2% V NIF – 15% XIII NIF – 9,8% XIV NIF – 5%	BRE Private Equity
PZU S.A.	II NIF – 20,2% IV NIF – 21,34% IX NIF – 21,71%	PZU NIF Management
WBK AIB CA IB	VI NIF – 21,57% XV NIF – 53,73%	AIB WBL Fund Management CA IB Management
Copernicus/ NIF Fund Holdings	VIII NIF – 32% XII NIF – 25,5%	KP Consortium Ltd.

Source: Hashi 'The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference', p. 8 and own research.

<sup>16</sup> Considering the depth of Polish financial markets and the relatively small size of investment funds, the law has provided some degree of protection against hostile takeovers in the first four years of NIFs public trading. According to the provisions no single shareholder may own more than 5% of shares of a fund in the first two years of the programme. The proportion was increased to 10% and 20% in the third and fourth year. Some institutions predicted takeovers of many NIFs within six months after listing funds on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. However for the whole period of time, there was no sign of a takeover attempt.

<sup>17</sup> Izabela Koładkiewicz, 'The institutional shareholder – best practice: the National Investment Funds' experience, *Corporate governance*, 10, 2002, 3, 183.

### *2.3. Supervisory boards of portfolio companies*

The funds together usually controlled the supervisory boards of the companies since the two other stakeholders who were entitled to representation on the board had a modest number of seats. It was in their interest if NIFs coordinated their actions and in that way gained an effective voice on supervisory boards. Thus, from the beginning, there was an implicit agreement amongst NIFs that the lead fund should also nominate the representative of minority funds. Since the Treasury was a passive investor, the likelihood of opportunistic behaviour by the lead fund increased. Although the role of the minority NIFs might seem to be marginal, they appeared to monitor the lead funds to some extent and therefore enhanced the governance structure, demanding for instance the disclosure of detailed financial information about portfolio companies. Their importance decreased as the funds disposed of minority shareholdings.

### *3. Assessment of the programme*

The results of the NIF scheme with respect to the restructuring and enhancement of the companies' value remains relatively blurred and inconclusive. The research evidence differs significantly: some researchers criticise the scheme heavily claiming that the Polish mass privatisation programmes failed to provide the expected results,<sup>18</sup> while others, however, express positive opinions towards the goals that were to be achieved.<sup>19</sup> The assessment of the programme is analysed below according to the criteria listed in the introduction to the paper.

#### *3.1. Shifting the ownership form state to private hands*

From the beginning of the programme until the end of 2001 the State Treasury sold its stakes in 115 companies for over \$195 million and in the case of 112 companies the state withdrew completely. At the end of 2001 the state was still involved in 381 companies, standing at 74.4% of the initial portfolio with an average stake between 10.7%-16.1%. This number is far from impressive and in the opinion of some researchers it contributed to the negative aspects of the Polish MPP. The Table shows state involvement in NIF at the end of 2004.

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<sup>18</sup> Irena Grosfeld, Thierry Tresselt, 'Competition and corporate governance: Substitutes or complements? Evidence from the Warsaw Stock Exchange', William Davidson Institute Working Paper, no. 369, 2001, <http://wdi.umich.edu/files/Publications/WorkingPapers/wd369.pdf> [accessed on 10 April 2002], (para. 20-1 of 41).

<sup>19</sup> Simon Commander, Mark Dutz, Nicholas Stern, 'Restructuring in transition economies: Ownership, competition and regulation', World Bank, 2001, [http://www.worldbank.org/research/abcde/washington\\_11/pdfs/stern.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/research/abcde/washington_11/pdfs/stern.pdf) [accessed on 6 April, 2002] (para. 30-2 of 43).

Table 3: State involvement in NIFs (December 2004)

Fund	Number of shares	Stake (%)
Fund I NIF	471,800	3.14
Jupiter NIF	2,972,527	5.71
NIF Progress	591,314	2.49
V NIF Victoria	917,036	6.10
NIF Magna Polonia	1,947,719	6.48
NIF Octava	4, 418,755	18.36
NIF Foksal	3,018,153	14.06
NIF Fortuna	1,071,922	7.13
Zachodni NIF	1,297,141	6.08

Source: Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', p. 52-3.

### 3.2. *The privatisation to strategic investors and restructuring of the companies*

Fund management companies carried out restructuring by assigning each 5-6 portfolio companies to a small team of their employees. Each team was directed by an investment director or a portfolio manager who assisted the companies in preparing their strategic plan<sup>20</sup>. As far as the restructuring activity is concerned evidence shows that labour shedding amounted to 10 and 20% between 1996 and 2000. Fund teams pursued significant changes especially in strategic management, production lines and product designs as well as budgeting, accounting and the compensation system. Approximately 300 companies that joined the NIF programme were subject to deep organisational and financial restructuring, including debt conversion, the reorganisation and implementation of new accountancy rules and improvements to the top management teams.

The NIFs' investments in portfolio companies between 1996-1997 is estimated at PLN 293 million in lead companies and PLN 203 million in minority companies. Additionally, strategic investors invested PLN 173 million. The data as of 30 September 2001 shows that NIFs invested 898.2 million PLN in the restructuring programmes in leading companies and 241.8 million PLN in minority companies. Altogether NIFs invested 1,140.3 PLN million which accounts for 62.4% of the gains realised from the sale of the companies. Meanwhile the sale of companies to strategic investors generated around 639 million PLN for NIFs, whereas the average income of NIFs from the disposal of portfolio companies in 1996-98 is estimated at PLN 143 million.

Due to the poor economic situation, portfolio companies entering the liquidation and bankruptcy process accounted for 20% of the overall number. At the end of 2001 16% of these cases were completed. Seven were revoked, whereas thirteen companies were subject to liquidation. The decisive strategy of the NIFs towards bankruptcy and liquidation proceedings may be linked to a more favourable position for the implementing of these politically unpopular procedures for companies that were considered to be financially unviable. The funds were simply better placed, as compared with the state, which was constrained by political pressures, to pursue the closure of unprofitable companies. Until 30 September 2001 NIFs sold 325 out of 512

<sup>20</sup> Hashi 'The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference', (para. 24 of 37).

companies (63% of their portfolios). More than half of the NIF portfolio companies found strategic investors and in two thirds of cases these were industrial-related investors. Some companies, mostly those in poor financial conditions were sold to insiders while at the end of 2001 shares in 26 companies were traded on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and ten on off-exchange market (CTO). At the end of September 2001 187 companies were still under the management of NIFs. The recent report of the State Treasury (2005) summarised NIF privatisation scheme indicating that out of 512 companies covered by the programme at the end of 2004:

- in 232 companies (46%) privatisation was fully completed;
- 130 companies were liquidated;
- 5 companies were merged in other units;
- 135 were actively controlled by the state.

The table below presents the breakdown of all the NIFs portfolios.

Table 4: Leading companies in NIFs portfolios

NFI	Number of leading companies in portfolio as of 1998	Number of leading companies in portfolio as of Sept 30, 2001	Number of leading companies in portfolio as of Nov 2006
01 NIF	35	10	Closing its activity
02 NIF	34	19	Closing its activity
03 NIF	34	11	0 (fund holds bonds and shares in 4 companies)
04 NIF	35	16	Closing its activity
05 NIF	35	7	Closing its activity
06 NIF	35	10	5
07 NIF	34	28	4
08 NIF	34	8	0 (fund holds in 5 real estate-related companies)
09 NIF	34	11	Closing its activity
10 NIF	33	13	Closing its activity
11 NIF	33	11	0 (merged with 03 NIF)
12 NIF	34	10	New strategy specialising in real estate
13 NIF	34	4	0, fund is closing its activity
14 NIF	34	12	Closing its activity
15 NIF	35	13	New strategy specialising in management of non-food consumer brands

Source: own calculations based on data from NIF annual reports and websites.

However, the strategy of the NIFs with respect to their role differs significantly. Some of the NIFs actively searched for strategic investors and carried out the reorganisation, whereas some others perceived themselves as purely financial investment funds

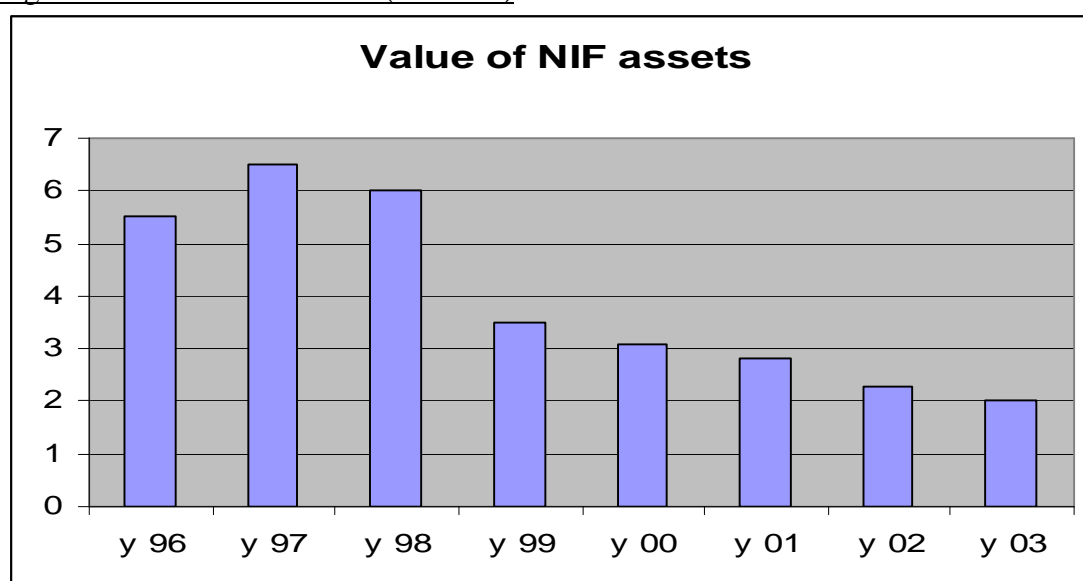
focusing more on trading shares and other securities on domestic and foreign markets. As the evidence shows many funds decided to pursue a very easy strategy – instead of actively restructuring portfolio companies they sold the most attractive assets to other investors and purchased bonds or other financial instruments. The quick liquidation assets strategy is the biggest disappointment of the NIF scheme.

### *3.3. Increase in firm value, improvement in productivity, investment, and sales*

Approximately, 30% of portfolio companies were recording losses at the time of joining the programme. Most of them represented problematic sectors such as: meat, clothing, coal mining and steel. Despite significant restructuring efforts, improvements in profitability (or reductions in losses) and labour, the productivity of portfolio companies showed significant long-turn market underperformance.<sup>21</sup> However, other research evidence shows that the firms included in the mass privatisation programme showed rapid improvements in their profitability before these companies were virtually privatised.<sup>22</sup> The proportion of the leading companies recording losses increased in 1996 before dropping to 29% in 1998. 71% in 1999 and 48% in 2000 of the leading companies generated net profits.

Despite important restructuring efforts carried out by the NIFs, their performance has been rather disappointing. The dividend paid by the funds was very small if any. The net assets value of most NIFs has not kept up with inflation.<sup>23</sup> Compared to 1997 the net asset value plummeted significantly which is perceived as opposite to the goals of the programme and government laws (figure 4).

**Figure 4: Value of NIF assets (bln PLN)**



Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Aussenegg, 'Going public in Poland: Case-by-case privatisation, mass privatisation and private sector initial public offerings', para. 25 of 44).

<sup>22</sup> Commander, Dutz, Stern, 'Restructuring in transition economies: Ownership, competition and regulation' (para. 31-2 of 43).

<sup>23</sup> Hashi, 'The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference', (para. 34 of 37).

The breakdown of the asset value of individual NIFs is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Net assets value of NIFs (million, PLN)

NIF	End 1996	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 1997	End 2000	End 2001	End 2003
I NIF S.A.	440	412	190	184	155
II NIF S.A.	470	459	155	146	140
IV NIF S.A Progress	390	405	230	190	175
V NIF S.A Victoria	340	299	150	135	120
VI NIF S.A Magna Polonia	350	328	240	200	180
VII NIF S.A im. Kazimierza Wielkiego	390	378	100	107	98
VIII NIF S.A Octava	380	347	340	331	250
IX NIF S.A im. E. Kwiatkowskiego	390	370	350	318	280
X NIF S.A Foksal	500	464	170	146	100
XII NIF S.A Piast	410	382	130	101	45
XIII NIF S.A Fortuna	500	378	200	185	160
XIV NIF S.A Zachodni	380	374	220	211	170
XV NIF S.A Hetman	410	401	270	131	70
NIF Jupiter (II NIF and XI NIF merged)	760	746	500	414	230

Source: based on Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych', p.12-13; Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', p. 17.

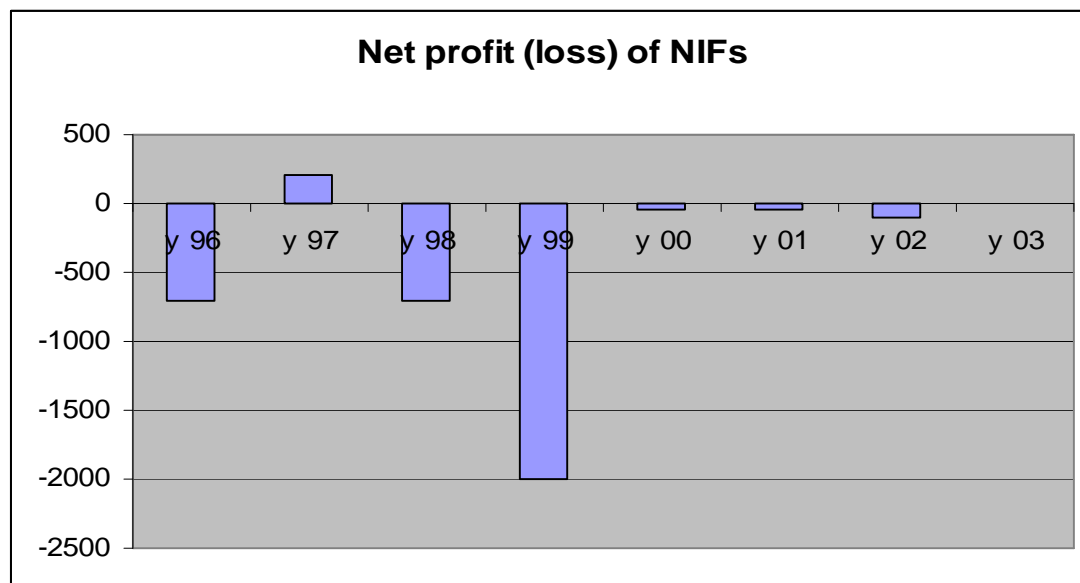
The loss of investment activity tends to be the major weakness of the NIFs. Despite the intensive sale of shares, the majority of capital was allocated in risk-averse bonds and debt securities which were unable to cover the losses of the portfolio companies. The loss on investment activity reached 16.42 million PLN at the end of 2001. The total profit of the NIFs in 2001 was negative as well and accounted for 51.2 million PLN,<sup>24</sup> which amounts to thirty-seven percent of the previous year's loss.<sup>25</sup> Figure 5 presents the net profit generated by NIFs during the period 1996-2003.

<sup>24</sup> Hashi, 'The Polish National Investment Fund Programme: Mass privatisation with a difference', (para. 26 of 37).

<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless ca. half of the NIFs generated positive profits at the end of 2001.



Figure 5: Net profit (loss) generated in NIFs, 1996-2003, mln PLN



Source: Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', p. 21.

### 3.4. The pace and scope of privatisation

The mass privatisation programme definitely contributed to the acceleration and the increasing scope of the privatisation process although it covered merely 512 companies and when compared to other CEE countries this appears to be minimal. For instance the MPP covered 1,800 companies in the Czech Republic and 15,000 companies in Russia. On the other hand the long duration of the scheme implementation raises questions as to whether the pace of privatisation could have been slower or faster if alternative methods had been used.

### 3.5. Lower costs of ownership change

It is extremely difficult to judge if the mass privatisation programme led to the reduction of the costs of ownership transformation. During the transition period Poland relied mostly on case-by-case privatisation, while on the other hand in cases of direct sale to investors allowed the generation of revenues needed for reforms. The mass privatisation programme was not costly since it was to a large extent financed by the World Bank. The sale of stakes in only 115 companies generated over 745 million PLN (approximately \$195 million) for the state which remains pretty moderate for privatisation revenues. Table 6 compares privatisation by three main methods.

Table 6: Comparison of privatisation by indirect, direct and NIF method

Element	Indirect privatisation (1990-2003)	NIF programme (1995-2003)	Direct privatisation (1990-2003)
Investment (mln PLN)	69, 655	6, 014	4, 955
Investment in environment protection (mln PLN)	4, 662	674.5	225
Employment	217, 097	63, 631	87, 747
Average salary (PLN)	2, 929	2, 270	2,130

Source: Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', 39.

### *3.6. Distribution of the 'national' wealth and boosting the public interest in the stock market*

The mass privatisation programme played a marginal role in Polish transformation.<sup>26</sup> The NIF scheme did not manage to encourage interest in the stock market. Public interest in the programme peaked during the certificate distribution and conversion then dropped afterwards. The average Pole did not feel any significant impact of the distribution of the wealth accumulated during socialism as the value of the certificate was very low. The majority of citizens decided either to sell the certificates even before they were converted into the 15 NIF shares or the NIF shares in the very first weeks of their trading and therefore interest in the stock market as such, was significantly limited.

### *3.7. Development of corporate governance mechanisms*

#### *Avoiding a control vacuum*

The NIF structure is characterised by the dominant position of one leading fund, the incentive of compensation for the fund management companies, the participation of the reputational foreign investors and the regulatory framework of the scheme, provided monitoring mechanisms and avoided a control vacuum (no dispersed ownership structure). The available data on the mass privatisation programme delivered evidence that the NIF structure did not suffer from a control vacuum which was common in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia. Just the opposite: it created a complicated and multi-level structure that caused the overlapping of competence of various agents and might in effect have led to higher transaction costs.

#### *Designing a structure of sound governance mechanisms*

The NIF structure may appear to be relatively successful with respect to the active role of funds, monitoring, incentive structures and restructuring results, yet some

<sup>26</sup> Michał Federowicz, 'Corporate governance and industrial relations in Poland', Centre for the Study of Economic and Social Change in Europe, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, Working Paper, no. 28, 2003, [accessed on 8 May 2005] (para. 17 of 22).

researchers claim that more attention should have been given to managerial incentives and supervision.<sup>27</sup> An MPP scheme that from the start adds one level of intermediary institutions as in the Polish case produced a complicated, multi-level structure that is associated with the problem of 'who monitors the monitors'.<sup>28</sup>

Additionally the trend towards increasing the concentration NIF ownership was accompanied with the extensive buy back programmes introduced by many funds. Therefore authors claim we can observe the phenomenon of 'disappearing' NIFs. Data shows that investors involved in the NIF structures tended to merge or buy back its shares and dissemble the funds. On average the NIFs bought back more than 10% of their own shares<sup>29</sup>. Investors (mostly foreign, powerful financial groups) that dominated the NIF ownership tended to be involved in other Polish companies but outside the NIF structure.

### *Evolution of active institutional investors*

The current NIF involvement in new Polish companies is marginal and in the non-MPP companies appears to be relatively modest. Funds are *de facto* in legal and organisational terms diversified conglomerates acting as closed investment funds<sup>30</sup>.

### *3.8. NIF scheme versus other privatisation methods applied in Poland*

Privatisation is an indisputable positive for the companies.<sup>31</sup> There is however no agreement about the scheme and the pace of the process.<sup>32</sup> Comparative studies of privatisation schemes in Poland show that the identity of the owner matters significantly. Outsider-owned privatised firms noted significantly higher annual revenue growth than either state or insider-owned firms. Firms privatised to outsiders, particularly to foreigners, tended to perform better in terms of labour productivity and investment.<sup>33</sup> Privatisation to investment funds is five times more productive as

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<sup>27</sup> Grosfeld, Tressel, 'Competition and corporate governance: Substitutes or complements? Evidence from the Warsaw Stock Exchange' (para. 15 of 41).

<sup>28</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 12 of 42).

<sup>29</sup> Hetman NIF bought 50% of its shares, Kwiatowski NIF bought 25% of its share, NIF Progress – 20%, NIF Octavia – 19%, Drugi NIF and NIF Jupiter 9-13%. Apparently, the tendency toward increasing ownership concentration results also from the ending time of the programme and associated payoff from the State Treasury and thus the ownership block enjoys higher premia. Some observers claim that the new, more concentrated structures evolving currently show higher efficiency since they eliminate one layer of agents in the corporate governance structure as noted by Maciej Samcik 'Wokół parkietu: NFI Hetman może zniknąć', 2002, *Gazeta Wyborcza* – on line resources, <http://www2.gazeta.info/elementy/druk.jsp?xx=1121702&plik=/htm/1121/a1121702.html>; Maciej Samcik 'Czy Prokom zainwestuje w fundusze NFI należące do PZU?' 2002; *Gazeta Wyborcza* – online resources, <http://www2.gazeta.info/elementy/druk.jsp?xx=1131064&plik=/htm/1131/a1131064.html>

<sup>30</sup> Szczepkowska, 'Funkcjonowanie przedsiębiorstw w ramach grup kapitałowych na przykładzie Narodowych Funduszy Inwestycyjnych', 11-2.

<sup>31</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 24 of 42)

<sup>32</sup> Svejnar, 'Transition economies: Performance and Challenges' (para. 8 of 45); Gerald Mc-Dermott, 'Network restructuring and firm creation in East-Central Europe: A public-private venture', William Davidson Institute Working Paper, no. 361, 2000, <http://wdi.umich.edu/files/Publications/WorkingPapers/wd361.pdf> [accessed on 10 April 2002] (para. 7-8 of 56).

<sup>33</sup> Commander, Dutz, Stern, 'Restructuring in transition economies: Ownership, competition and regulation' (para. 15-16 of 43); Roman Frydman, Cheryl W., Gray, Marek Hessel, Andrzej Rapaczynski, 'The limits of discipline', *Economics of Transition*, 8, 2000: 579.

privatisation to insiders, whereas privatisation to foreigners and blockholders is three times more productive as privatisation to insiders. Concentrated ownership is beneficial<sup>34</sup> but as shown by Grosfeld and Tressel<sup>35</sup> the controlling shareholder in Poland has a negative effect, when a CEO, bank or NIF controls the company.<sup>36</sup> Relative to MEBOs, mass privatisation and direct sales more than double the productivity change recorded over the subsequent two years, with the effect slightly stronger for direct sales. Insider privatisation has been mostly associated with low investment, limited managerial change and product innovation.<sup>37</sup> Table 7 presents performance of companies privatised by the NIF scheme as compared companies privatised by other methods.

Table 7: Performance of privatised companies in 2003

Method	No	Loss making (net)	Cost ratio	Operating ration	Net operating ratio	Liquidity ratio
Total	2,434	34.7	93.5	5.9	4.4	24.4
Sole State Treasury companies	337	39.5	87.3	10.9	9.8	28.8
NIF	367	43.3	98.4	1.9	0.6	13.2
Indirect privatisation	275	32.4	94.0	6.0	3.9	30.3
Controlled by the state	174	35.6	102.7	-2.7	-4.0	14.7
Debt swaps	12	58.3	106	-5.7	-5.8	16.9
EBO	1092	25.7	96.9	3.1	1.9	32.6
In process of direct privatisation	18	83.3	90.2	9.6	17.0	1.0

Source: Source: Ministry of State Treasury, 'Report of NIF programme 1997-2003', 35.

As shown in the table performance of companies privatised by the NIF scheme remains disappointing.

<sup>34</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 25 of 42).

<sup>35</sup> Grosfeld, Tressel, 'Competition and corporate governance: Substitutes or complements? Evidence from the Warsaw Stock Exchange' (para. 20-1 of 41).

<sup>36</sup> In the Czech Republic ownership concentration is associated with better performance as long as strategic investor other than investment fund is the author of this concentration as noted by Andrew Weiss, Georgiy Nikitin, 'Performance of Czech companies by ownership structure', William Davidson Institute Working Paper, no. 186, 1998, <http://wdi.umich.edu/files/Publications/WorkingPapers/wd186.pdf> [accessed on 3 April 2002], (para. 3 of 45).

<sup>37</sup> Commander, Dutz, Stern, 'Restructuring in transition economies: Ownership, competition and regulation' (para. 15-6 of 43).

### *3.9. Polish NIFs versus the MPP in other Central and East European countries*

Research shows that 19 out of 25 transition countries used some form of mass privatisation as either a primary or secondary method,<sup>38</sup> although the applied schemes varied significantly in terms of structure, pace and governance mechanisms that eventually evolved. In most of the Central and East European countries mass privatisation programmes were implemented earlier and faster than in Poland. A total of 512 Polish companies privatised via 15 investment funds amounts to a marginal share of all companies as opposed to many of Central and East European countries: some 600 funds were created for 2,352 privatised companies in the Czech scheme<sup>39</sup> whereas the Russian MPP covered 14,000 medium and large enterprises accounting for two thirds of the industrial labour in terms of employment.

Russia and Ukraine implemented rapid mass privatisation and relied mostly on management-employee buyouts, whereas the Czech Republic, Lithuania and to a lesser extent Slovakia based their programmes upon equal-access voucher distributing the shares among the society<sup>40</sup> and privatising the companies via investment funds.<sup>41</sup> The rapid mass privatisation was crucial from the perspective that it used the window of opportunity and eliminated the threat of reform regression. On the other hand, the equal-access voucher privatisation allowed for speedy and relatively fair distribution of the nation's wealth. However, neither method contributed to the emergence of new investment funds nor generated resources for government. Moreover, both led to a poor corporate governance structure.<sup>42</sup> Rapid mass privatisation failed to provide the existing management with incentives or the tools for improving efficiency. The equal-access voucher privatisation resulted in dispersed ownership since the programme usually involved the whole population of a country. Researchers argue that the failure of the voucher mass privatisation to provide effective governance structure is rooted in the structure of long agency chains since a citizen who receives a privatisation voucher cannot provide appropriate incentives for corporate control.<sup>43</sup> From this perspective the voucher investment funds provided a 'vehicle for high abuse'.<sup>44</sup> The dispersed ownership resulted in a control vacuum which in turn led to tunnelling carried out by managers or majority shareholders at the expense of minority shareholders<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, the Czech case shows that the investment privatisation funds acted more like agents than owners since they were receiving a management fee but did not benefit from any increase in the equity value. Additionally since the stock

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<sup>38</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 12 of 42).

<sup>39</sup> Coffee, 'Privatisation and corporate governance: The lessons from securities market failure', (para. 22 of 71).

<sup>40</sup> Svejnar, 'Transition economies: Performance and Challenges' (para. 31 of 45).

<sup>41</sup> Coffee, 'Inventing a corporate monitor for transitional economics: The uncertain lessons from the Czech and Polish experiences', 122.

<sup>42</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para 12-4 of 42); Coffee, 'Privatisation and corporate governance: The lessons from securities market failure', (para 24 of 71).

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, 'Whiter reform?', ABCDE Conference Washington D.C., World Bank 1999; Joseph Stiglitz, 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? Corporate governance failures in the transition', ABCDE Conference, Paris, World Bank, 1999 as quoted in Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 14 of 42).

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, 'The role of government in economic development', in Michael Bruno, Borin Pleskovic (eds.) Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington D.C., World Bank, pp. 11-23 as quoted in Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para. 14 of 42).

<sup>45</sup> Coffee, 'Privatisation and corporate governance: The lessons from securities market failure', (para 23 of 71); Svejnar, 'Transition economies: Performance and Challenges', (para. 12 of 42).

market was small, institutional investors were locked in without a choice of either exit or voice.<sup>46</sup> However, in principle it was possible for financial intermediaries to concentrate their voucher holdings and carry out the effective monitoring as happened in Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia and to some extent in the Czech Republic, although the 'who monitors whom' structure was not always clear<sup>47</sup>.

Further research indicates the crucial role of the regulatory and institutional regime that created the framework for privatisation<sup>48</sup>. In the Czech case regulations allowed for trading the shares for companies subject to privatisation outside the stock exchange and trading on the Prague Stock Exchange (PSE) did not require contemporaneous price reporting which contributed to the systematic looting of Czech companies by their controlling shareholders (IPFs) and the expropriation of the remaining minority shareholders.<sup>49</sup> As result of these problems between 1995 and 1999 the number of companies listed on the PSE fell by more than 80% (from 1,716 to 301). Therefore, the quality of the regulation appears to be a crucial element in the privatisation programme and the efficiency of new ownership structures.

### *Conclusions*

The results of the Polish MPP are highly controversial and relatively blurred. Despite a lot of criticism one can conclude the main goals were achieved. Restructuring was carried out in most of the portfolio companies. Many of the NIF companies were sold outside, mostly to strategic and industrial-related, investors. The financial results, although still highly disappointing, improved. Comparative analysis shows that the Polish MPP as opposed to the Czech, Slovak or Russian schemes provided a relatively adequate control structure. It is however, harder to say to what extent looting was reduced. The structure which introduced one additional level of agents turned out to be complicated and costly. The investors involved in the NIF scheme were present in the Polish market but outside of the NIF structure. The NIF structure was not as efficient as one tailored by market institutions. It is however highly disputable whether the MPP contributed to the development of governance mechanisms in Poland. The NIFs were hardly involved in the ownership of Polish companies, they evolved towards purely investment activity and ownership concentration appeared to be the most significant control mechanisms used by the funds. The NIFs' stake accounted for between 10 to 16% ranging from an average of 21% of some privatised, to 6% of new set companies.<sup>50</sup> Besides foreign and domestic companies, and to a lesser extent banks, it is questionable whether other institutional investors would be willing to engage in the active governance of Polish companies. On the other hand, the change in the ownership and governance structures of both portfolio companies and the NIFs indicates that ownership concentration is very important in transition economies. Additionally, these changes show how the development and importance of capital networks and shareholdings tended to play a crucial role in the Polish governance system.

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<sup>46</sup> Coffee, 'Inventing a corporate monitor for transitional economics: The uncertain lessons from the Czech and Polish experiences', 125

<sup>47</sup> Estrin, 'Competition and corporate governance in transition', (para 12 of 42).

<sup>48</sup> Edward Glaesser, Simon Johnson, Andrei Shleifer, 'Coase versus Coasians', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116, 2001, 3, 894.

<sup>49</sup> Coffee, 'Privatisation and corporate governance: The lessons from securities market failure', (para. 31-2 of 71).

<sup>50</sup> Grosfeld, Tressel, 'Competition and corporate governance: Substitutes or complements? Evidence from the Warsaw Stock Exchange' (para. 18-9 of 41).

Comparatively the Polish scheme is 'the least mass' of the MPPs in the transition economies. Poland was the only country so far that administratively structured its investment funds. Many experts indicate the deficiencies and negative aspects of mass privatisation programmes across the CEE which may lead to the conclusion that the scheme is wrong from the outset.<sup>51</sup> From this perspective the Polish model, although it did not lead to efficient restructuring or emergence of corporate governance, was able to minimise, but not fully eliminate, the most problematic aspects of mass privatisation.

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<sup>51</sup> For instance, the evaluation of Russian privatisation programme shifted from optimistic to concerned and doubtful in 1995 as the second 'cash' phase of privatisation was not proceeding in a rapid or honest manner, then to alarm, in late 1995-early 1996, over the 'loans-for-shares' programme in which some very high potential, natural resources-based funds were transferred in a matter neither competitive nor transparent nor lucrative to the selling state, to a group of financial 'oligarchs' connected to the presidency. And there were few signs of substantial restructuring, much less production growth, in the firms privatised by vouchers' as noted by John Nellis, 'Privatization in transition economies: What happened? What comes next?' 2000, World Bank, <http://pppue.undp.org/indexAction.cfm?module=Library&action=GetFile&DocumentAttachmentID=31> [accessed on 10 February 2007] (para. 4-5 of 15). Addressing the poor performance of the Russian economy during the period 1995-1998 and the inequitable distribution of wealth, the Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow described Russian privatisation as "a predicable economic disaster" and former advocate of rapid privatisation and adviser to CEE governments, Jeffrey Sachs, called for re-nationalisation of the mis-privatised companies in order to re-privatise them a second time correctly.



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